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SPIRITUALITY

AUTHENTIC LITURGY REFLECTIONS ON THE REVISION OF THE QURBANA TEXT

Mar Abraham Mattam

**ORIENTALISM ECCLESIAE ET SYRO-MALABAR LITURGY:
HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Dr. Thomas Mannooramparampil

DIVINIZATION: THE HEART OF THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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ASCETICISM: AN INNER CONVERSION

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BOOK REVIEW, NEWS

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EDITORIAL

The memorial of Jesus' paschal mystery in the Divine Liturgy is comparable to the experience of the apostles on the mount of transfiguration, where Peter, James and John beheld the beauty of God's glory – a glimpse of heaven on earth. Pope Benedict XVI in his new book *Jesus of Nazareth* convincingly shows that Jesus' transfiguration is linked with the Jewish feast of Tabernacles, a celebration originally borrowed from natural religiosity God for the gift of rain. It becomes a feast in remembrance of God's protection in the desert when the Jews lived in tents during their journey to the promised land. The remembrance in turn becomes hope for definitive redemption of the just finally gathered in the eschatological tent. By experiencing the transfiguration at the feast of tabernacles the apostles recognized that the realities prefigured by the feast were accomplished in Jesus. On the mountain the three apostles saw the glory of God's kingdom shining out of Jesus and were overshadowed by God's holy cloud. Through the awe-inspiring encounter with God's glory in Jesus, they experienced the anticipation of *Parousia*. This is exactly what happens in every Divine Liturgy.

In the offering of bread and wine in the Eucharistic celebration God, the Creator is glorified for his loving providence. The Eucharist itself is at the same time an *anamnesis* of the slavific deeds of God in history through His incarnate Son. It is also the pledge of great hope for the resurrection of the dead and in the life everlasting in heaven. In the Eucharist, Jesus' glory as the Son of God and the Messiah is manifested and the disciples are witnesses to it. They are overshadowed by the holy cloud of God's presence and thereby share in his glory. Peter wanted to give permanence to the revelation of glory by erecting three tents (Lk 9,33). This desire of Peter is being fulfilled by the perpetual continuation of the Eucharistic celebration.

Fulfillment in our lives is found in our participation in the Trinitarian life offered to us in the holy mystery of Eucharist. It enables us to draw near to God's life and to persevere in the same until we are united with him in the *eschaton*. An authentic Christian spirituality presupposes an active and effective participation in the Holy Qurbana. The first article in this Volume by Mar Abraham Mattam, "Authentic Liturgy: Reflections on the Revision of the

Qurbana Text", enunciates the salient features of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari with a view to aid the active participation. Dr. Thomas Mannoram-parampil in his article, "Orientalium Ecclesiarum and the Syro-Malabar Liturgy: Historical and Theological Perspective", highlights the teaching of Vatican Council II on the liturgy pointing out its application in the Syro-Malabar Church. He beautifully explains how deeply "inculturated" was the Apostolic Church of St. Thomas in India.

Active participation in the liturgical celebrations leads the faithful to communion with God. The incarnate Son of God invites man to an authentic life

of communion with the Father. Dr. Sebastian Vethanath in his article, "Divinization: the Heart of Theological Anthropology", describes the idea of divinization in different religious traditions and especially in the Christian tradition. According to him, "the Syriac tradition understands divinization especially linked with the idea of mutual exchange between the divine and human natures through Christ's incarnation." The fourth article by Dr. Mathew Anatharackal CMI, "Asceticism: An Inner Conversion", proposes asceticism as a means to arrive at the blissful state of communion with God.

Fr. Andrews Mekkattukunnel

AUTHENTIC LITURGY

Reflections on the Revision of the Qurbana Text

Mar Abraham Mattam

1. Basic Theological and Liturgical Norms Disregarded

There are theological and liturgical principles and norms to be followed in the revision of the liturgical texts. Based on these, the ordained priest, the deacon and the laity have their distinct roles in the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy. But some of the changes and options introduced in the 1969 text of the *Thaksa* for the Solemn and Simple Forms of the *Qurbana* are found to be not in keeping with these principles. There was a preoccupation in the revision to shorten the celebration to the minimum, which makes it a skeleton of the real Oriental celebration. Another problem was the lack of a clear understanding of the distinct roles of each sections of the Christian communion, especially with regard to “active” participation of the laity.

1.1 Active Participation

In the Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* Pope Benedict XVI deals with this point under the heading, “*Actuosa Participatio*”, “Active Participation”. He writes, “The Second Vatican Council rightly emphasized the active, full and fruitful participation of the entire People of God in the Eucharistic celebration... Yet, we must not overlook the fact that some misunderstanding

has occasionally arisen concerning the precise meaning of this participation. It should be made clear that the word “participation” does not refer to mere external activity during the celebration.” (SCar, 52).

2. What the Council Intended

The Holy Father continues: “In fact the active participation called for by the Council must be understood in more substantive terms, on the basis of a greater awareness of the mystery that is being celebrated and its relationship to daily life. The Conciliar Constitution on liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* encouraged the faithful to take part in the eucharistic liturgy not as “strangers or silent spectators,” but as participants “in the sacred action, conscious of what they are doing, actively and devoutly (SC, 48).

3. The Function of the Priest

Pope Benedict says further: “The active participation of the laity does not benefit from the confusion arising from an inability to distinguish, within the Church’s communion, the different functions proper to each one. There is particular need for clarity with regard to the specific functions of the priest. He alone and no other, as the tradition of the Church attests, presides over the Eucharistic celebration from the initial greeting to the final blessing. In virtue of his reception of the Holy Orders

he represents Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, and, in a specific way, also the Church herself" (SCar, 53).

4. The Priest, Minister and Mediator

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) speaks of priests: "The ministerial priest, by the sacred power that he has, forms and rules the priestly people; in the person of Christ he effects the Eucharistic sacrifice and offers it to God in the name of all the people. The faithful indeed, by virtue of the royal priesthood, participate in the offering of the Eucharist" (LG, 10). *Lumen Gentium* further says: "...They (priests) are consecrated in order to preach the Gospel and shepherd the faithful as well as to celebrate the divine worship as true priests of the New Testament. On the level of their own ministry sharing the unique office of Christ the mediator ... it is in the eucharistic cult or the eucharistic assembly of the faithful that they exercise in a supreme degree their sacred functions ... acting in the person of Christ" (LG, 28).

Pope John Paul II, in the encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* elaborates the phrase: "in the name of Christ, *in persona Christi*": "The phrase *in persona* means more than offering 'in the name of' or 'in the place of' Christ. *In persona* means in specific sacramental identification with the eternal High Priest who is the author and principal subject of this sacrifice of his, a sacrifice in which, in truth, nobody can take his place" (EE, 29).

Christ is the only Mediator between the Father and the whole human race. Likewise in the Eucharistic celebration the priest who shares the mediatory role offers the Sacrifice

for all the people and intercedes or mediates on behalf of all.

The above theological teachings find an expression in the prayers of the Holy Qurbana of the Syro-Malabar Church. For example, when the priest requests the prayers of the faithful in the Anaphora, the people respond: "May Christ hear your prayers and accept your Qurbana. May he ... be pleased in this sacrifice, which you offer on your own behalf, on our behalf, and on behalf of the whole world that hopefully awaits His grace and mercy forever, Amen."

After the fraction and consignation the priest prays: "Glory to you, O Lord Jesus Christ, for though I am unworthy, you have in your mercy appointed me a minister and mediator of your holy, glorious, life-giving and divine mysteries."

5. Eucharistic Prayer: Recited Only by the Priest

Pope John Paul II in the encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* reminds us of the prescriptions of the Roman Missal in these words: "... the ordained priest who 'acting in the person of Christ brings about the Eucharistic sacrifice and offers it God in the name of all the people' (LG, 10). For this reason, the Roman Missal prescribes that only the priest should recite the Eucharistic Prayer, while the people participate in faith and in silence" (EE, 28).

The Roman document "Sacrament of Redemption" (*Redemptionis Sacramentum*) published by the special instruction of Pope John Paul II, points out: "The proclamation of the Eucharistic Prayer which by its very nature is the climax of the whole celebration,

is proper to the Priest by virtue of his Ordination. It is therefore an abuse to proffer it in such a way that some parts of the Eucharistic Prayer are recited by a Deacon, a lay minister or an individual member of the faithful, or by all members of the faithful together. The Eucharistic Prayer, then is to be recited by the Priest alone in full" (RS 2004, 52).

The following number lays down: "While the Priest proclaims the Eucharistic Prayer there should be no other prayers or singing, and the organ or other musical instruments should be silent," except the people's acclamations that have been duly allowed" (RS, 53).

Within this general principle, the Roman Missal makes provision for a few acclamations, responses, signing of the *Sanctus*, and at the end the response, *Amen*.

The document is published by the Congregation for Divine Worship, but the principle, namely, the function of the ordained priest in the Eucharistic celebration, is the same in the Syro Malabar Rite as well.

The Syro-Malabar *Thaksa* follows the same principle; the priest alone does the proclamation of the Anaphora. There is provision for the faithful to sing the *Sanctus*, and to make some responses like, "May Christ hear your prayers ... and mercy for ever," etc. At the end of the prayers they respond, "Amen."

6. Abuses and Reprobated Practices

The same document in another place calls reprobate some practices in the celebration of the Eucharist. It says; "The reprobated practice

by which priests, Deacons or the faithful here and there alter or vary at will the texts of the Sacred Liturgy that they are charged to pronounce must cease. For in doing thus, they render the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy unstable, not infrequently distort the authentic meaning of the Liturgy (RS, 59).

In the Syro-Malabar Church we have come to such a state that in many places the priest and the faithful take the freedom to change and alter the prayers in the *Thaksa* and add or omit them, and sing some devotional hymn out of place, even without any reference to the Eucharistic celebration, according to each one's liking.

7. Avoiding Misleading Terms

The Sacrament of Redemption brings our attention to some misunderstanding that has occurred regarding the different roles of the priest and the people in the Eucharistic celebration, and consequently inappropriate use of terms. It says: "Nor is the Eucharistic Sacrifice to be considered a "concelebration", in the univocal sense, of the Priest along with the people who are present. On the contrary, the Eucharist celebrated by the Priests is a gift... There is a pressing need of a concerted will to avoid all ambiguity in this matter and to remedy the difficulties of recent years. Accordingly, terms such as "celebrating community" or "celebrating assembly" ... and similar ones should not be used injudiciously" (RS, 42). In sermons and homilies, it seems, priests often do not have a clear idea about the role of the ministerial priesthood, and are causing confusion in the minds of the people, telling them "we are together celebrating the *Qurbana*".

Some changes introduced and options allowed in the Syro-Malabar *Qurbana* text of 1989, as mentioned at the beginning, are not in keeping with the general principles elaborated above, and are not according to our own authentic tradition. It happened due to absence of thorough study, and because of compromises made out of pressure, etc. Due to the division of opinion, some important items are left optional. These points are raised here as a study; and further scope for improvement is still open. Some instances are pointed out below.

7.1. Omission of the Creed

The option to omit the creed in the Simple form of *Qurbana* on ferial days is not according the Oriental tradition and spirit of the Liturgy. The Oriental Congregation gives the correct position in an Instruction to the Bishops in 1981 as follows: "The traditional text and location of the creed are obligatory in all liturgies. The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed is a fixed element before the Anaphora in all Eastern traditions except the Ethiopian. Parallels with Roman usage, based on a totally different history, has no relevance here". It seems, sometimes the recitation of the Creed in the Rosary is given greater importance than in the celebration of *Qurbana*.

7.2. Posture during *G'hanta*

The traditional posture for the *G'hanta* is that the celebrant recite the prayer bending himself and extending his hands, the palms slightly folded upwards.

However, the 1989 text of the *Qurbana* says; "The celebrant bowing and with hands joined recites the *G'hanta*." I remember how this change happened. At a meeting of the

Bishops' Conference one or two of the bishops remarked that our Indian custom is to pray with joined hands. Praying, bowing oneself and extending the hands was to them a Muslim custom. On the contrary, Muslims must have adapted it from Christian practice. Other bishops did not object to it and the proposal was accepted without proper study of its significance and without much discussion. Praying and meditating with hands folded and joined together is a common custom in India among Christians and non-Christians alike. The faithful also while participating in the liturgy keeps the hands joined. So the result is that the priest recites *G'hantas* without any distinct and appealing posture. The only difference is that he bows a little.

7.3. Splitting the *G'hantas* and *Kusappas*

In the Anaphora the priest, sharing the mediatory role by virtue of his ordination, intercedes for the people and prays for various intentions in the *G'hantas* and intercessory *Kusappas*. The *Kusappa* after the third *G'hanta* has been split into three and the faithful are to pray "Lord, accept our *Qurbana*" (optional). As elaborated above this is not permissible. The prayer is reserved to the ordained minister and the faithful are not to intervene in the course of the prayer. The people are not to assume the role of the ordained minister. Active participation of the laity does not mean splitting single prayers of the Anaphora to give a chance for the faithful to utter a few words every now and then.

We must take note that in the earlier text of the *Thaksa* this *kusappa* was to be recited quietly. As a rule the *kusappas* are said silently.

Most of the *kusappas* are made optional and as a result priests omit them. The silent prayers (*kusappas*) of the priest leave moments of silence during the celebration, which create an atmosphere of reflection and make an impression on the mind. It adds to the solemnity and beauty of the divine service.

Pope John Paul II writes in the Apostolic Letter *Mane Nobiscum Domine*: "Care should be taken to show that awareness (of real presence) through tone of voice, gestures, postures and bearing. In this regard, liturgical law recalls - and I myself have recently reaffirmed - the importance of moments of silence both in the celebration of Mass and in the Eucharistic adoration" (MND 2004,18). The reference is to the Pope's Apostolic Letter *Spiritus et Sponsa* on the 40th Anniversary of Constitution on Liturgy (SC), where he says: "One aspect that we must foster in our communities with greater commitment is *the experience of silence*. We need silence if we are to accept in our hearts the full resonance of the voice of the Holy Spirit and unite our personal prayer more closely to the Word of God and the public voice of the Church...The Liturgy, with its different moments and symbols, cannot ignore silence" (MND, 2004,18).

7.4. Second and Third Anaphoras

Revision of the texts of the Second and Third Anaphoras are underway, and some people are Proposing to split the *G'hantas* and *Kusappas* in them. The purpose is to insert a little prayer for the faithful "to keep them engaged" during the celebration. As explained earlier this would not be permissible. Proclamation of the Eucharistic Prayer is reserved to the Ordained minister. People are to take part "in faith and in silence".

7.5. Verses recited by the Priest and Faithful alternately

Before the Fraction of the Bread the priest is to recite silently a few verses from Psalm 51. "Have mercy on me O God, in your love; in the depth of your tenderness blot out sins" etc. This is meant as a personal prayer to help the celebrant to proceed with a heart of compunction. But now it is prescribed that the celebrant and the faithful alternate these verses. This is a misplaced application of the principle of "active participation of the laity" without taking into account the whole structure and the nature of the *Qurbana*. The penitential litany of the faithful comes just before communion.

7.6. Prayer of the Deacon

During the Fraction, there is the prayer which begins, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven..." The Latin and Syriac texts assign this prayer to be recited by the Deacon. But somehow in later texts the rubrics prescribes that the people recite the prayer or sing. The Malayalam *Thaksa* has given the prayer in the form of hymn and prose. It would have been proper at this point of the celebration that the Deacon loudly recites it. Now what happens in many churches is that any devotional hymn that is made available by lyricists in the market is sung, even songs without any direct reference to the Eucharist.

7.7. Penitential litany vs. Prayer of the Priest

During the penitential *karoꝋutha*, in preparation for communion, led by the Deacon the people respond, "Lord, forgive the sins and offences of your servants". This

is like a general confession of sins. At this time the priest is to say a prayer appropriate for his own communion. The prayer begins, "Blessed are you, O Lord, God of our Fathers...." He recalls God's mercies and salvation wrought through Christ. Then the priest acknowledging his unworthiness prays, "make us also worthy ... to receive the gift in all purity and holiness; ... and united to the Body and Blood of your Christ, may together with all the saints, shine brightly at His great and glorious manifestation." It is a pity that this beautiful prayer is now usually left out by priests and they prefer to join the penitential litany of the faithful led by the Deacon. The idea behind it may be that the priest and the people should, as far as possible, say the same prayers.

7.8. The Role of the Deacon

In the celebration of the *Qurbana* the deacon has specific functions. He announces the diptychs, prepares the gifts (bread and wine), and leads the people in prayer and assists at the distribution of communion. An acolyte cannot perform these functions. The Syro-Malabar Synod has decided to revive the custom of permanent diaconate in the Church. Now it is to be introduced by the dioceses. The example of the Church in USA should be an incentive for us. The statistics of the Church in USA in 2004 show that all but 7 dioceses had permanent Deacons. The total number of permanent Deacons in 170 dioceses was 14,019. We could start with our bigger parishes where there is greater need for the services of permanent Deacons.

7.9. Kissing the Altar, bidding adieu

Another example resulting from the confusion of roles - The *Thaksa* prescribes, that after the final blessing, the celebrant comes to the center of the altar, bows or kisses it saying: (silently): "Remain in peace, altar of forgiveness; remain in peace sepulcher of our Lord ... I know not whether I shall come again and offer another sacrifice upon you". In some places the priests say this prayer aloud along with the people. Is it another example of active participation? Do the people, men and women, ever ascend the altar in the sanctuary and offer the sacrifice? If the faithful were to say the prayer with the priest it would give a wrong impression that they are "concelebrants" with the priest. It is misleading and ludicrous - what the "Sacrament of Redemption" calls "reprobated practices".

It is very important that the faithful are well instructed in liturgical matters, especially about the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. They must be able to understand the sense of the prayers, including that of Eucharistic Prayers, and the symbolic meaning of the actions and gestures in order that conscious, fruitful and active participation becomes a reality.

Our sad experience shows that in the seminaries much more attention should be given to the liturgical training and formation of the students according to the instructions of the Second Vatican Council and directions of the Holy See.



ORIENTALIA ECCLESIAE ET LITURGIAE SYRO-MALABARICAE: HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Thomas Mannooramparampil

Prime place of Liturgy

One of the important achievements of Vat.II is the promotion of theology and spirituality based on liturgy. The Council adopted a theological style based on Holy Scripture, Fathers and Liturgy. The well known basic policy of 'return to sources' helped to bring about deep awareness of the great value of the sources of the oriental theology and liturgy. Because of the importance of liturgy in the life of the Church and of its internal value the document on Sacred liturgy takes the first place. The first article of the Constitution on Sacred Liturgy sets forth four aims of the Council, namely: 1). to impart an ever-increasing vigour to the Christian life of the faithful 2) to adapt more suitably to the needs of our own times those institutions which are subject to change 3) to promote union among all who believe in Christ 4) to strengthen whatever that can help to call the whole of mankind into the household of the Church. The means of achieving these goals are proposed to be the reform and promotion of the liturgy.

Sacrosanctum Concilium and its Relevance

In the preparation of this document the commission for the preparation of the

document had two problems: 1) should it confine itself to the Latin liturgy? 2) Should it be practical, containing only the decisions of reform or should these be afforded a theological justification?

The first question was important. The council was not a council of the Latin Church, but an ecumenical council. So it was not proper that it limits itself to the Latin Liturgy. But the problem of the reform cannot be examined seriously in most of the oriental churches except in the context of dialogue between the Churches in ecumenism with Rome and those, which are not. No oriental church has asked for reform or renewal of the liturgy. The need of many latinized churches was the reform of their liturgies in their original purity. Therefore it was necessary to leave aside the oriental liturgies and treat only the reform of the Roman liturgy, enunciating the principles, the validity of which cannot be limited to the Roman liturgy alone. Only general principles are applicable to all the liturgies. The practical norms, which follow, should be taken as applying only to the Roman liturgy ^[1] (SC 3). Since the whole document was mainly meant for the Latin liturgy, the council did not point out which principles concern the oriental liturgies also. Negative

[1] Sacrosanctum Concilium 3, quoted as SC

consequence of it is that norms, which are exclusively meant for the Latin liturgy, are misunderstood or misinterpreted to be also for the Orientals and thus the document has become an additional instrument for latinization. The solution to the second problem is that it should be disciplinary and doctrinal and therefore it is not a decree but a constitution. One never fails to find framed within a theological liturgical back-ground the more important norms of practical nature.

Binding only the general principles

Against those who quote to justify the undue changes in the Syro-Malabar liturgy 1985 document says: "It should be remembered in this connection that the conciliar constitution on the sacred liturgy is only in its most general principles applicable to all liturgical traditions, not in its detailed prescriptions which hold good for the Roman tradition. Appeals made to Vat II to justify certain changes in oriental texts and usages are in not a few cases simply renewed attempts at latinization^[2]. The instruction of 1996 tries to remove any doubt about the applicability of the provisions of SC in the Malabar Church in the following words: "The practical norms of the constitution and those of the Code of canons promulgated in 1983 must be understood as affecting only the Latin Church. The principles and norms of liturgical nature which directly concern the Eastern Churches are found instead in various conciliar documents such as *Lumen Gentium* (n 23), *Unitatis Redintegratio*^[3]

(nn14-17) and even more importantly in *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*^[4]. These exalt the inalienable value of the specific and thus diversified traditions of the Eastern Churches. After the Second Vatican Council, the most important collection of norms for the Eastern Churches is constituted by the code of canons of the Eastern Churches^[5]. Since the same liturgy is used by the Churches in communion with Rome and the Churches not in communion with Rome we have to refer to the documents which pertain to these Churches, namely the Decree on Ecumenism (UR) and the Decree on Oriental Churches (OE).

The Applicability of Orientalium Ecclesiarum

Love for Liturgy

The decree on ecumenism N.15 reminds of the special importance and great love the East has for liturgy: "Everyone also knows with what great love the Christians of the East celebrate the sacred liturgy, especially the Eucharistic celebration, source of the Church's life and pledge of future glory, united with their bishop, have access to God the Father, through the Son, the Word made flesh, Who suffered and also has been glorified ...Hence, through the celebration of the Holy Eucharist in each of these churches, the Church of God is built up and grows in stature, and through concelebration, their communion with one another is made manifest."

[2] OIRSI, *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy*, Kottaym 1999, 113

[3] Quoted as UR

[4] Quoted as OE

[5] Id, 170

Plurality does not harm unity

The plurality of the Apostolic Eastern Churches with their own forms of ecclesiastical law and custom is not an obstacle to the Church's unity, rather diversity of customs and observances only add to her splendour (UR 16). UR 17 says that this variety, which exists in the Church, can be applied also to the differences in theological expressions of doctrine. Various theological expressions are to be considered mutually complementary rather than conflicting.

Theological value of Eastern rites

Then the article UR 17 throws light on the value of Eastern theology; "Where the authentic theological traditions of the Eastern Church are concerned, we must recognize the admirable way in which they have their roots in Holy Scripture, and how they are nurtured and given expression in the life of the liturgy. They derive their strength too from the living tradition of the Apostles and from the work of the Fathers and spiritual writers of the Eastern Churches. Thus they promote the right ordering of Christian life and, indeed, pave the way to a full vision of Christian truth". Then the council declares: "All this heritage of spirituality and liturgy, of discipline and theology, in its various traditions, this holy synod declares to belong to the full Catholic and apostolic character of the Church". It is in this connection we have to understand OE 1: "The Catholic Church holds in high esteem the institutions, liturgical rites, ecclesiastical traditions and the established standards of the Christian life of the Eastern Churches, for in them, distinguished as they are for their venerable antiquity, there remains conspicuous

the tradition that has been handed down from the Apostles through the Fathers and that forms part of the divinely revealed and undivided heritage of the universal Church". UR 17 elucidates further its antiquity: "With regard to the authentic theological traditions of the Orientals, we must recognize that they are admirably rooted in holy Scripture, fostered and given expression in liturgical life, and nourished by the living tradition of the Apostles and by the writings of the Fathers and spiritual authors of the East; they are directed toward a right ordering of life, indeed, toward a full contemplation of Christian truth". The variety within the Church in no way harms its unity: rather it manifests it, for it is the mind of the Catholic Church that each individual Church or Rite should retain its whole and entire tradition. (OE 2) Therefore fidelity to the II Vatican Council consists in respecting the individuality of each Church which should keep its whole and entire tradition.

Equality of rites

The decree insists on the equality of particular Churches and also of the liturgies: "The individual Churches, although they differ somewhat among themselves in rite, that is, in liturgy, ecclesiastical discipline and spiritual heritage are of equal dignity, so that none of them is superior to the others as regards rite. They enjoy the same rights and under the same obligations, even with respect to preaching the gospel to the whole world (cf. Mk 16:15) under the guidance of the Roman Pontiff. (OE 3). This article alludes to the change of attitude of the past when Latin Rite and liturgy were awarded pre-eminence as the Rite and liturgy

of the Pope. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy para. 4 teaches : “in faithful obedience to tradition, this most sacred Council declares that holy Mother Church holds all lawfully acknowledged rites to be of equal authority and dignity; that she wishes to preserve them in the future and to foster them in every way. The Council also desires that, where ever necessary, the rites be carefully and thoroughly revised in the light of sound tradition ,and that they be given new vigour to meet the circumstances and needs of modern times”. No rite is superior to any other rite or is a model to which all others are to adapt. In the past by pressure or persuasion exercised by the Latin missionaries or authorities of the Latin Church hybrid forms were imported from outside.

There is no reason to abandon Oriental vestments to replace them by Latin ones. Oriental vestments are as nice as the Latin ones. There is no reason to give up Oriental prostrations to introduce Latin genuflection. Why to make the sign of the cross in the Latin way? Why to replace fermented bread by Latin host? Why to adapt Gothic, Romantic and baroque style ?

Guidelines for the Syro-Malabar Church

A response^[6] 1,4ff cited SC to justify the changes they made in the liturgy. Against this the 1985 doc. Says: “It is in no way opposed to seeing the Malabar liturgy evolve in accord with the norms of Vat.II (SC 4 and OE6). Thus this doc.applies SC 4 in the Syro-Malabar

Church. It makes three things clear: 1) all rites are of equal right and dignity. 2) the Church wants to preserve and foster them 3) if needed, the rite can be revised in the light of sound tradition.

‘Fundamental Doctrinal Principles for an authentic Liturgical Reform’ in 1980 doc. says: “Liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church should remain faithful to the traditional Syro-Malabar Liturgy and to the norms of the conciliar decree Oriental Churches No 6 in connection with nos. 5 and 12. On Aug. 28, 1980 the Holy Father while speaking to the Syro Malabar and Malankara bishops on the occasion of the *ad limina* visit quoted OE 2and 6 to insist that these churches should be faithful to their own traditions.

OE 5 states: “History, tradition and abundant ecclesiastical institutions bear outstanding witness to the great merit owing to the Eastern Churches by the universal Church. The Sacred Council, therefore, not only accords to the ecclesiastical and spiritual heritage the high regard which is its due and rightful praise, but also unhesitatingly looks on it as the heritage of the universal Church. For this reason it solemnly declares that the Churches of the East as much as those of the West, have a full right and are in duty bound to rule themselves, each in accordance with its own established disciplines, since all these are praiseworthy by reason of their venerable antiquity, more harmonious with the character of their faithful and more suited to the promotion of the good of souls”. The praise given in the first part of the article is applied

[6] A study sent to the Oriental Congregation by a few Syro-Malabar Bishops who wanted some changes in the 1983 Roman Documents

only to the old, preschismatic Eastern Churches. It is their right and duty to rule themselves according to their own discipline which are more suited to their own faithful. Therefore the particular hierarchy is bound to study, protect and promote this heritage of their own church over which they preside. They are not above the Church but are within it. They are not the masters of it but faithful stewards.

OE 6 insists on the fidelity to the authentic liturgical tradition, saying: "All the members of the Eastern Rite should know and be convinced that they can and should always preserve their legitimate liturgical rite and their established way of life, and that these may not be altered except to obtain for themselves an organic improvement ...All these, then, must be observed by the members of the Eastern rites themselves. Besides, they should attain to a greater knowledge and a more exact use of them, and, if in their regard they have fallen short owing to contingencies of times and persons, they should take steps to return to their ancestral tradition". This is the mandate given to the authorities of the Syro-Malabar Church. As an Oriental Church, it should preserve its legitimate rites and foster them. As the Council notes, "Zeal for the promotion and restoration of the liturgy is rightly held to be a sign of the providential dispositions of God in our time, as a movement of the Holy Spirit in His Church. It is today a distinguishing mark of the Church's life, indeed of the whole tenor of contemporary religious thought and action" (SC 43). In order to know what is to be preserved they should acquire greater knowledge of their own rites and their ancestral traditions. Rites

are to be revised on the basis of sound tradition. Changes are necessary on two conditions: 1) Changes should come from within. 2) They must be organic. To introduce changes in the liturgy in order to imitate other rites cannot be justified. It is in this light we have to evaluate the changes made in the Syro-Malabar liturgy; for example, the place of bema in the middle of the church, sign of the cross from right to left, the use of St. Thomas cross in the liturgy etc. The purpose of any reform is to facilitate the full, conscious and active participation of the faithful. Therefore people should know the acclamations, responses, psalms, antiphons, hymns, gestures etc. Liturgy is not performed in the church building. It is to be lived. Therefore we should know what it really is. In order to help the people to have active participation, the revision of the order is made in such a way that parts become more clear and their co-relation comes forth more clearly (SC 21). In this connection it is relevant to examine how the present instruction regarding facing the people in the Syro-Malabar Qurbana agrees with its structure.

On Other Sacraments

Let us recall some instructions of OE about the sacraments, which have direct bearing on the Syro-Malabar Church.

Article 12 says: "The sacred Ecumenical Council confirms and approves the ancient discipline of the sacraments existing in the Oriental Churches, as also the ritual practices connected with their celebrations and administration and ardently desires that this should be reestablished if circumstances warrant it." It is the ancient authentic discipline

of the sacraments together with its practice that is confirmed. It tacitly disapproves certain practices which crept into the liturgy in the past and are in use. It is the genuine Oriental discipline of the sacraments that is to be restored. Syro-Malabar Church should assimilate its sacramental theology and liturgy from its authentic sources.

Articles 13 and 14 deal with the sacraments of initiation. They are administered together in the East Syrian tradition. Children are given the Holy Communion immediately after baptism. The decree has given up the Latin term 'confirmation' in favour of chrismation. Oriental Churches give much importance to the blessing of holy myron (chrism). It is blessed by the patriarch in the Oriental Orthodox Church. Obtaining myron from the patriarch is not considered as a sign of submission but as a sign of communion. The minister of chrismation with the holy myron is priest in all Oriental Churches. East Syrian Rite did not have myron in the past.^[7] There are no rite for the consecration of myron in the East Syrian Church. The present rite is that of Mar Abdiso Kayyath of the Chaldeans.

Article 15 speaks about the sanctification of Sundays and feast days which is a general obligation of the faithful. It was the Synod of Diamper which made attendance at Qurbana

on Sundays an obligation under mortal sin. The second part contains an exhortation to receive Holy Communion as often as possible. Except the obligation of giving communion to children after baptism, we have no other information about the regulation regarding the Holy Communion in the Syro-Malabar Church. Vincenzo Maria wrote that the Malabarians were receiving the Holy Communion almost all days^[8,9]. Raulin says that they have the practice of receiving the Holy Communion thrice a year. Gouvea testifies that all were receiving the Holy Communion on Maundy Thursday and on other solemn feast days^[10].

Article 16 says: "The faculties for hearing confessions duly and without restriction given to priests of any rite by their own hierarchs extend to the whole territory of him who grants them and also to the places and faithful of any other rite in the same territory unless the hierarch of the place has expressly excluded this for places of his rite". There had not been among the Thomas Christians the custom of granting separate permission to priests to absolve sins in the sacrament of reconciliation. This permission was supposed to have been given at the time of the priestly ordination. Mar Joseph does not mention this among the qualities required for a confessor. There were the practices of general confession and general

[7] Dr. John Madey, *The so-called Liturgical Reform of the Syro-Malabar Church*, in *The Particular Oriental Vocation of the Nazrani Church in Communion with Rome* (Alleppey 1976) 113.

[8] Viaggio Alle Indie Orientali (Roma 1672) 146

[9] *Historia Ecclesiae Malabaricae cum Diamperitano Synodo* (Roma 1745) 387, 389

[10] *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Don Frey Alexo Menezes, Primas do India Orientali* (Coimbra 1606) 59

absolution, auricular confession and individual absolution and public penance. Absolution was generally given during the Qurbana. It was the Synod of Diamper which made annual confession an obligation under mortal sin.

Article 17 speaks about the restoration of permanent diaconate where it has fallen into disuse. The legitimate authorities of each particular Church can decide about the subdiaconate and the minor orders and the rights and obligations that are attached to them. Syro-Malabar Church has restored permanent diaconate although no body has been until now ordained. The reasonability of subdiaconate is under discussion.

In the case of marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic Oriental the canonical form of celebration of the marriage is obligatory only for liceity; for their validity the presence of a sacred minister is sufficient. (OE 18) According to canon 88 of the *motu proprio* of Pope Pius XII (1949) mixed marriages between Catholic and non-Catholic partners of Eastern tradition will not be valid unless it is blessed by a Catholic minister. Now it is valid if blessed by an ordained minister from the side of either of the partners. Syro-Malabar Church has reached an agreement with the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church to this effect.^[11]

Each particular church is obliged by virtue of OE 6 to restore its calendar. The Malabar Church restored its monastic calendar already in 1955. It was using the cathedral calendar till the 16th century. The present

sanctoral calendar in it contains several feasts of the Latin Church. Thus the feasts of the Sacred Heart, Christ the king and Corpus Christi have place in the Syro-Malabar calendar. It has suppressed the feasts of East Syrian saints and transferred the feasts of Latin saints to the dates on which the Latin Church celebrates them. As a general rule whenever the Holy See issues decrees in regard to feast days, they will have legal force for Eastern Churches only if it is said expressly that they are binding to them also. The feast of Sts Peter and Paul falls on the second Friday in the temporal calendar of our Church whereas it is on the 29th June in the Latin Church. We need not celebrate the same feast twice a year. The commemoration of the dead is on Friday before the beginning of the great Lent and the feast of all saints is on the first Friday after Easter in the Syro-Malabar Church. The great Lent begins on Monday in the Malabar Church whereas it commences on Ash Wednesday in the Latin Church. Syro-Malabarians need not follow the Latin calendar in such cases.

Article 21 asks the individual faithful dwelling outside the area or territory of its own to follow completely the established customs of the place where they live as regards the sacred seasons. To strengthen the unity of family the members of the family of mixed rite can make a choice to follow the law of one Church *sui juris* in regard to the celebration of the feast days, fast, abstinence and prohibited times. But this law must be always followed.

[11] Dr.Xavier Koodapuzha, Oriental Churches An Introduction (Kottayam 1996)87-93

Article 22 is an exhortation to continue or revive the practice of common sanctification of the day. This sanctification does not take place not only in the celebration of the Eucharist but also in the Divine Office throughout the day.

In the East Syrian Church there had been the obligation for the clergy to recite the divine office in public^[12]. The Synod of Mar George, canon 15 recommends the participation of the faithful in the Divine office. In early days it was recited only on feast days and Sundays. But towards the end of the seventh century they introduced the practice of daily recitation. But nowhere we find the obligation of reciting it in private and under mortal sin. The same practice was followed in Malabar. Monserrate speaks of the nature of the obligation to recite the divine office in Malabar: "The priests considered it to be recited only in choir, for they were not seen to say the office outside the choir."^[13]

Article 23 directs that the Apostolic See should be informed of the activities in the field of liturgy. Since liturgy belongs to the patrimony of the universal Church, the universal Church must take care that it is not weakened. The Holy See has the power to eliminate possible doctrinal errors in liturgical texts, which may creep into the translation. Translation should not become a new liturgy

using the old name and containing theological views other than those of the original. For translation strict directives have been issued from the Holy See.^[14]

It is also useful to recall OE 27 which speaks of the reception of the sacraments of penance, Eucharist and Anointing of the sick. The first part of the article refers to the Oriental non-Catholics who have not formally defected from the Catholic Church, but were born in a Church believing that their Church is the true Church. They should ask for the sacraments on their own accord and should have right disposition. Catholics are also equally allowed to ask for these sacraments from the ministers of non Catholic Oriental Churches who have valid sacraments. The conditions are the absence of a Catholic priest or physical or moral impossibility of approaching him or also a genuine spiritual benefit.

Romanization of the Liturgy

When the Portuguese came to Malabar, the Thomas Christians were following East Syrian liturgy and the law of Thomas (Thoma Marga). They conformed the Thomas Christians to the Latin tradition. They either mutilated or changed their liturgy. The Latin authorities changed their discipline, theological tradition, ascetical practice and administrative systems.

[12] The Synod of Mar Isaac, canon 15

[13] Archivium Romanum Societatis Jesu, Vol 33, fol.149

[14] Instruction on Translation of Liturgical Texts, January 25, 1969; Consilium for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy LRC Publications No 2 (Kochi 2000); *Liturgiam Authenticam*. On the use of Vernacular languages in the Publication of The Books of the Roman Liturgy, LRC Publications No.3 (Kochi 2001)

Under the pressure of the Portuguese Mar Jacob introduced private confession in the Church using the formula of absolution from *Rituale Romanum*.^[15] Instead of the pagoda style of architecture for the construction of Churches he allowed Western architectural style with façade and tower^[16].

Mar Joseph introduced unfermented bread and allowed Portuguese wine for the Qurbana¹⁷. He translated the Roman text of the sacrament of extreme unction^[18] and introduced Roman vestments for use in the Syro-Malabar Church^[19].

Mar Abraham had to translate with the help of Fr Francis Roz the Roman Ritual containing the rites of the Mass, sacraments, sacramentals, Pontifical and Breviary for the use of the diocese of Angamaly^[20].

The synod of Diamper ordered the Roman Mass to be translated into Syriac. The Anaphoras of Nestorius, Theodore and Diodore were omitted from the text of the Qurbana. Creed was made conformable to the Roman Missal. The sign of the cross had to be made from left to right instead of right to left. The use of statues, surplice and holy oil was to be as in the Roman liturgy. The Roman calendar began to be used although some Eastern commemorations were retained. The rite of Ash Wednesday was

translated from the *Rituale Romanum*. The rites of administering the sacraments was made conformable to the manner of the Roman liturgy. The sacramentary was asked to be translated from the *Rituale Romanum*. With the peculiarities of the diocese of Braga Roman baptismal formula was to be used. Confirmation was to be administered separately. Roman Pontifical took the place of the East Syrian Pontifical. The tradition of public penance and giving local names to children were prohibited. The holy oil should be used according to the Romans custom. There should be three vessels containing the holy oils for baptism, confirmation and extreme unction. The recitation of Divine Office was made obligatory under mortal sin in private if not in choir. The day is to be counted from midnight to midnight.

The statutes of Roz gave prescription regarding the communion of the faithful, reservation of the Holy Eucharist in the Church after the Qurbana, distribution of Communion under the species of bread alone, Holy Communion for the sick and communion outside the Qurbana. He made the distinction between private Mass, high Mass etc.

Printed taksa

The taksa was printed in Rome in 1774 under the title '*Ordo Chaldaicus Missae juxta*

[15] *Report of Roz in 1604*, British Library MS add 9853

[16] Silva Rego, *Documentacao oar la Historia des Misseos do Padroado Portugues do Oriente*, India Vol.II (Lisbon 1947)244

[17] P.J.Podipara, *Nammude Ritu* (Mannanain 1944)34

[18] Kollaparampil, *St.Thomas Christians' Revolution in 1653*, p.17

[19] Mackenzie, *Christianity in Travancore* (Trivandrum 1901) 65.

[20] Giamil, *Genuinae Relationes inter Sedem Apostolicam et Assyriorum Orientalium seu Chaldaeorum Ecclesiam*, (Rome 1902) 74

Morem Ecclesiae Malabaricae Superiorum Permissu Editus' which was the Rozian Qurbana with a few more Roman elements added to it. It added several prayers which were not in the East Syrian Qurbana. Qurbana begins with the sign of the cross and the prayer 'in the name of the Father...' It prescribes genuflection each time the priest handles the sacred species after the Words of Institution. In 1766 June 1, the Congregation for the correction of books of Oriental Churches decided to retain elevation of sacred species after the Words of Institution. East Syriac calendar was substituted by the Roman calendar. The prayers of vesting were added to the text.

Two other texts were printed later: *Ordo Chaldaicus Ministerii Sacramentorum Sanctorum* and *Ordo Rituus et Lectionum* (Romae 1775). These three books form the taksa. It contained also the Syriac translation from the Roman Missal of the services for Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Passion Friday and candle Mass of the 2nd February. The sacramentary printed in 1775 was a Syriac translation of the *Rituale Romanum*. The second edition of the sacramentary appeared in 1845 with translation of other ceremonies from the *Rituale Romanum* such as formulas for blessing holy water, place, candles, food, statue and holy pictures.

Bishop Bernardine

Some of the changes introduced by Archbishop Bernardine Bacinelle (1853-1868) were: The celebrating priest should prepare the chalice in the sacristy before the Qurbana, carry it to the altar and should take it back after the Qurbana. Five colours for the liturgical vestments were prescribed: white, red, black,

green and violet. Novenas and monthly devotions to the saints were introduced and the prayers for them were translated into Syriac from Latin in 1868. The number of fasts was reduced to nine.

Fr. Kuriakose Chavara

Fr. Kuriakose Chavara prepared Thaksa in Malayalam with thoroughly Roman adaptations. He introduced the High Mass with a deacon and subdeacon assisting, which contained the full text and 'gloria in excelsis Deo of the Roman missal. He also prepared the first Roman calendar for the Syro-Malabarians with Roman feasts. He dedicated each day of the week to saints. He encouraged monthly devotions. He translated novenas for feasts, the service for forty hours devotion and the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament for common use from Latin to Syriac.

Bishop Leonard Melano

He fostered popular devotions. He prescribed the Syriac translation of the nuptial blessing intra missam from *Rituale Romanum*. In 1880 the office for the dead was printed. He ordered that the choir should wear choral cope; all the churches should have tabernacle for keeping the Eucharist; rosary should be prayed in Churches and homes.

The indigenous bishops

They continued the policy with regard to the liturgy. In 1905 Mar Louis Pazheparampil added some Roman feasts to the taksa. In 1930 the feasts of Christ the King and of little Therese of Lissieux were added to the calendar. A new service was translated from Roman rite for bishops officiating the ceremony of confirmation. Services for the

pastoral visit of bishop and for the vestition of women religious were translated from Latin and were printed in Syriac. The Syriac version of Holy Saturday from the Latin rite was printed in 1943. The rubrics of the Pontifical High Mass were made the same as those of the Roman rite. They continued to adapt liturgical texts from the Latin rite translating them to Syriac and putting them into common use.

As a result of the complete implementation of all liturgical texts in the Malabar Church, Syro-Malabar Christians became strangers to their own liturgy and ecclesial life. They became very much attached to the Latin way of life. The spirituality they foster is based on popular devotions of the medieval western church.

Restoration of the Liturgy

Pontifical

This was the shape of the Syro-Malabar liturgy until the restoration of its original liturgy. The occasion for necessitating such a restoration was the need which the Syro-Malabar bishops felt for a Pontifical. In 1896 Msgr Zaleski sought permission from Rome to make a translation of the Latin Pontifical into Syriac for the use of these bishops. In 1908 the bishops requested Pope Pius X to approve the translation of the Roman Pontifical. In 1929 they submitted a Syriac translation of it, which was later rejected owing to defects in the translation. Finally on Dec.1, 1934 Pope Pius XI took the decision to restore the ancient East Syrian Pontifical for them and asked to restore the whole East Syrian liturgy for the Syro-Malabar Church. On 8 July 1958

the Holy See promulgated the restored Syriac Pontifical for the use of the Syro-Malabar Church. It was introduced into use for the ordinations to presbyterate in 1960.

Divine Office

The Chaldean Divine Office, which was used in Malabar before the Synod of Diamper, was reprinted in 1938 under the auspices of the Congregation for Oriental Churches for the Syro-Malabar Church. The commission for liturgy prepared in 1965 the texts of the sacraments in Latin, which, though abbreviated, was faithful to the original. The commission also gave a draft of the services for the holy week. It contained the services for Osana, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter. They were mainly taken from the Divine Office.

Holy Qurbana

On June 26, 1957 Pope Pius XII approved the restored text of the Qurbana. It was published in three volumes: 1) *Taksa d'Quddasa* containing the ordinary and three anaphoras, 2) *Ordo Celebrationis "Quddasa" juxta usum ecclesiae Syro-Malabarensis* (1959) containing the rituals of the Qurbana for four forms namely simple, solemn, most solemn and Pontifical 3) *Supplementum Mysteriorum sive Proprium Missarum de Tempore et Sanctis juxta Ritum Ecclesiae Syro-Malabarensis* (1960) containing the readings and propers for the seasons and feasts. The taksa containing the anaphora of Addai and Mari and ordinary was published in Syriac on May 12, 1960. The proper parts of the Raza were indicated in brackets in their proper places, not giving the texts. The partial Malayalam version of the

simple form of the Qurbana with the Anaphora of Addai and Mari was introduced into use on 3rd July, 1962. The rubrics contained in Ordo celebrationis were not fully implemented in it. It did not include the propria given in Supplementum Mysteriorum. The full-restored taksa as the Holy See has approved it should contain the ordinary of the Qurbana, three anaphoras, provision for three forms to be indicated in the taksa and *supplementum Mysteriorum*. The rituals given in *ordo* are to be integrated in it.

Unhealthy Development in the process of the restoration and renewal

Text of the Qurbana

The provisions given in the approved text of the Qurbana began to be watered down with the two documents which gave guidelines for the implementation of the restored taksa: *De Ritu sacrificii Eucharistici instaurato* on 20, Janu 1962 and *De Celebrando Quddasa ex ritu Syro-Malabarensis* of 3rd Dece., 1963. A taksa, which differed considerably from the 1962 taksa, was introduced on 15th Aug. 1968. Soon after the publication of 1968 taksa the exarchs of North India brought out in English and Hindi taksa entitled 'Holy Qurbana according to the Syro-Malabar Rite' in 1970. It did not translate 1968 formula and did not omit any prayer as proposed in 1969. On 16 Aug. 1970 SMBC gave approval to a Malayalam taksa for the High Mass. Later an anonymous taksa pro manuscripto booklet namely *Akhozhamaya Pattu Qurbana* appeared without any ecclesiastical approval. This began to be used for solemn Qurbana, especially on feast days in Churches all over the Church. This was the

sung version of the simple Qurbana modeled on 1968 taksa. The liturgical committee of Ernakulam Archdiocese published Bharatiya puja on 31 March 1974. A short mass (mini mass) was published on 3 July 1974. The new taksa prepared by the subcommittee appointed by SMBC was printed in 1978. It was rejected by the SMBC. At the end of its meeting on 26-30, Aug. 1980 Cardinal Rubin, the prefect of Oriental Congregation requested the SMBC to prepare and submit a draft text of the Qurbana to the Congregation by Easter 1981. After studying it the Congregation issued on 1 March 1983 a doc 'Observations on the Order of the Holy Mass from the S. Congregation for the Oriental Churches. The bishops who welcomed the document sent to the Congregation a doc'. 'Observations on the Directives from the Holy See on the Qurbana Taksa' (16 Aug. 1983). Those who did not welcome the Roman document sent another doc', 'A Response to the Observations of the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches' (undated). As a response to these doc. The Congregation issued a doc "Final Judgement of S. Congregation for the Oriental Churches concerning the Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana (24th July 1985). The Raza prepared following strictly the directives of the Roman documents was approved by the said Congregation on 19 December 1985 and was inaugurated by the Holy Father Pope John Paul II on 8 Feb 1986. On 5 May, 1988 the Congregation issued another doc. 'Directives on the Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana in Solemn and Simple Forms.' It allowed several matters which had been prohibited by the previous documents. The taksa prepared on the basis of this document was

approved by the Congregation on 3 April 1989 with some modifications and it came into use on 15 Aug. 1989. After five years of use changes could be proposed.

The SMBC, which met in Ernakulam, entrusted to a subcommittee the task of improving the language of the 1986 text. The SMBC, which met at Pune in January 1992, decided to print the text, which had been thus prepared, and to use it in those dioceses where English text was found necessary. As in the Malayalam 1986 text, hymns in it are given in Syriac tunes. The synod held on 14 - 20, 1999 discussed the need of the uniform mode of celebration and unanimously agreed to the following: 1) From the beginning till the anaphora - facing the people 2) the whole of the anaphora, Communion inclusive- facing the altar and 3) the part after the Communion - again facing the people'. Attempt is being made to prepare the full text of the Qurbana as approved by Pope Pius XII, which contains all elements of the Qurbana namely the ordinary, three forms with the integration of the ordo celebrationis and supplementum and calendar. It is a sad fact that the present text and the manner of celebration do not respect the theology and the structure of the original celebration. It is a consoling fact that the Congregation has published the edition typical of the Qrbana on 6 June 2003 with the imprimatur of Ignatius Mousse Card. Dour, the prefect. It follows 1960 Syriac text and is based on the Malayalam text of 1986. It should have included the three anaphora's and supplemental along with the three forms of celebration. The commission for liturgy again made some modifications in the English text, printed it and gave it for the use in the Syro-

Malabar Church on 15th August 2005. The text which was approved by the Congregation for the Oriental Churches in 1989 still continues to be the official text. It is to be noted that the language of 1986 English text was not modified in 1989 text.

Studies show that the present structure of the Qurbana is not original and therefore needs further revision. For example, though the formal procession starts at the beginning, the celebrant comes down from the sanctuary to the Bema in the Haikla at the time of the "Lord of all". This correction was made in the English text approved by the Holy See in 1985. The present practice of placing the Gospel back on the altar after its veneration by the celebrant and the other ministers in the Raza is wrong. The correct practice is first to have the Gospel procession to the Bema and then its veneration also by the people, during which the turgama is sung and then follows its reading. At the prostration ceremony the blessing of the veil is not an authentic practice. The veil began to be used instead of the Bema. Hence instead of the veil people are to be blessed

Preparation of other liturgical texts in the Syro-Malabar Church

The ordination rite published in 1960 is used only in some dioceses. Others use another text, which is different from the official text. The rite of Episcopal consecration was published in 1968 and many other versions of Episcopal consecration exist at present. Now CLC is working on the translation of all items of the pontifical except those of corepiscopa and Archdeacon. The Malayalam text published in 1969 for the Episcopal

consecration is not identical with the text of the restored text. It was abridged and modeled after the Latin Pontifical with four readings, anointing with chrism, special formula for vesting, mitre, crozier and ring. The priestly ordination is also distinguished by new prayers, strange readings and anointing with chrism.

In 1968 a text was prepared in the name of *kudasakal* basing on the Latin text from Rome. Another text was published in the same year. In the text for baptism oil is signed with priest's finger dipped in mooron which is blessed by bishop. Mooron does not belong to the East Syrian rite. The ritual says that water blessed in one baptism can be used also in other baptisms. It is a violation of the East Syrian tradition, which knows only consecration of water in each baptism. There is also a desacralizing prayer by which the used water returns to its previous nature. It is poured into a place where it is not trodden by people. Baptism should be administered by immersion. The traditional baptismal formula is "N is baptized in the name of the Father (deacon: Amen), and of the Son (Deacon: Amen) and of the Holy Spirit (Deacon: Amen) for ever". But the Malayalam text gives indicative form of the formula. chrismation is strictly linked with Baptism. The ordinary minister of Baptism and Chrismation is priest. The true tradition is to confer baptism and chrismation together, followed by the Holy Communion.

Anointing of the sick was prepared imitating the *Rituale Romanum* with all the anointings of the Latin rite instead of the one, which was given in the text given from the Oriental Congregation. The Latin rite has given

up all anointings except on the forehead and hands. Before the Synod of Diamper this sacrament was not administered in the present form. St. Thomas Christians used to take earth from the tomb of St. Thomas and to give it to the sick to drink.^[21]

Another text, which was prepared by the subcommittee headed by Mar Kuriakose Kunnacherry, also came out. It was rejected by CLC. After having obtained the *recognitio* of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches on 22 June 2004, the Major Archbishop Mar Varkey Vithayathil promulgated the final text of the sacraments on 1st December 2004. It came into official use from 6th January 2005. It is beyond doubt that it is not a mere restoration since the prayers of the rites are almost free composition taking ideas from the original texts, and several rubrics have been either changed or omitted.

The Divine Office for the great Lent and for the period of resurrection was published on 1967. It did not pay much attention to the faithfulness with the original. In 1971 the divine office for the periods of *subara*, Christmas and *Denba* were published. In 1982 the divine office for the periods of Apostles, Elia-sliva-Moses and Dedication of the Church were published. In 1986 the whole divine office in three volumes, which has provisional approval from the Congregation, was published. None of them is a faithful translation of the original. An attempt is being made to modify this text and to prepare a definitive text. For religious sisters a single volume was published, arranged in seven weeks, without any regard for the liturgical year. In rendering psalms the text

[21] F.E. Keay, A History of the Syrian Church in India (Delhi 1938) 93

appears as if a free version of the English translation of the Bible. With regard to onyatha they are independent creations without any correspondence to Bedjan.

The Malayalam ritual for the Consecration of Churches published in 1967/68, although is an abridged form of the original, was made according to the taste of those who produced it.

In 1968 there appeared a service for the Ash Wednesday, which cannot be found in the East Syrian rite. It imitates the Latin rite service in everything. It does not respect the structure of the East Syrian liturgical year according to which the Great lent does not begin on Ash Wednesday but on the previous Monday. An appropriate inauguration service for the great Lent should have been made.

In 1968 a Malayalam text for Benediction of the Bl. Sacrament was published, after rejecting a text in Latin which had been given from Rome on March 16, 1963 basing on the Offices of the East Syrian rite. This new text can be considered neither Latin nor Syrian by tradition. The ritual for the celebration of feasts of 1968 is not faithful to the East Syrian rite. The ceremonies of Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, and Holy Saturday of 1968, communion service of Good Friday were modeled on the Latin rite. The prayers and ceremonies of Christmas night, and beginning and end of New Year of 1968 were adaptations of practices existing in the Latin Church. The book of blessings

(sacramentals) completely modeled on Latin ritual appeared in 1972. The only liturgical book which is almost keeping the traits of the East Syrian rite is the vernacular version of the funeral service and the office of the dead, published in 1966. The book containing the commemorations of the dead (1968) and the office for the burial of priests and children are stuffed with litanies and hymns having no basis in the ritual tradition.

Most of the books, which are mentioned above, are claimed to be the creation Fr. Abel. These liturgical books, are extensively used in the Syro-Malabar Church. He claims that he has prepared 23 books. They are really translations of or adaptations from the Roman or Romanized rites, rituals and customs into the Syro-Malabar Church without respecting the East Syrian liturgical heritage^[22]. On the other hand, the liturgical books which are translated from Syriac original and were used in the East Syrian tradition are used in several dioceses^[23]. Both sets of liturgical books lack official approval.

Regulation of Liturgy

In this connection we are reminded of what *Mediator Dei* of Pope Pius XII says: "Private individuals, therefore, even though they are clerics, may not be left to decide for themselves in these holy and venerable matters (N.58). SC 22:3 states: "No person, even if he be a priest, may add, remove or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority". This teaching is applicable to all liturgical books.

[22] Abel, Foreword to Parecatil, Liturgy Ente Drushitiyil (Ernakulam 1987) 1

[23] Geo Thadikkat, Liturgical Identity of Mar Thoma Nazrani Church (Kottayam 2004)133.

Regulation of liturgy depends solely on the Apostolic See (SC 22:1). Final Judgement from the Holy See dated on July 24, 1985 repeats the teaching of Vat.II that it is for the Holy See to reform and approve liturgical books, and for bishops to regulate the liturgy in accord with these norms (SC 20-22), and nobody is allowed to proceed on his own initiative in this domain.”^[24] Even a patriarch with his synod is permitted only to regulate the use of language in the sacred liturgical functions and after reference to the Holy See, to approve translation of texts into the vernacular (SC 223). No individual has the power to authorize liturgical texts. During the Syro-Malabar Bishops’ ad limina visit on May 14, 2003 the Holy Father reminded them: “As the primary custodians of liturgy, you are called at all times to be vigilant to protect against unwarranted experimentation by individual priests who violate the integrity of the liturgy itself and can also cause great harm to the faithful”. The instruction makes the role of bishop clear again. By saying that the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches indicates the role of the eparchial Bishop as the moderator, promoter and guardian of the entire liturgical life of the eparchy. It continues to state: “The task of the Bishop is to be vigilant that the liturgical life be fostered as much as possible and ordered according to the prescriptions and legitimate customs of his own Church *sui juris*. The Bishop, therefore, does not act solely on his own judgement nor based on the local customs, but refers to the specific heritage of his own Church *sui juris*.”^[25] Final Judgement

No 14 laments on the shocking irresponsibility of some of those who hold high office in the Syro-Malabar Church. It is a sorrowful fact that this Apostolic Church is left without officially approved liturgical texts which are used in the whole Church. Attempt is being made to form definitive texts for the use of the entire Church.

The Mission of the Church

OE 5 declares that the Churches of the East and of the West should rule themselves according to their own discipline. Thus Syro-Malabar Church received a mandate to restore its genuine canonical tradition and to eliminate whatever has crept in from other rites. Although the Syro-Malabar Church has been given its own hierarchy the indigenous bishops continued to encourage latinization. Therefore the Holy See had to take the initiative for the restoration of its lost identity, beginning with liturgy.

In the restoration we have to pay special attention to safeguard the chief characteristics of the East Syrian tradition. For example,

1) A Spirituality of resurrection through which the cross has become the symbol of living Christ; a Trinitarian spirituality through which the Holy Spirit acts as the power of the Father.

2) A spirituality of the Bible, which is particularly influenced by the Pauline vision of the adopted sonship of Christians And the Johannine vision of God’s love surpassing man’s love.

[24] *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy* 120.

[25] *Instruction For Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* (January 6, 1996) No.23

3) A symbolic structure and a sense of the divine mystery represented by a ceremonial set up.

4) A tendency towards contemplating the mysteries of our redemption in the Liturgy both in its historical and eschatological dimensions.

5) A particularly deep sense of the Church as the salvific community, the bride of Christ and the harbinger of eternal bliss.

Resistance

But from the very start, Syro-Malabar bishops resisted it. For Cardinal Parecatil, St.Thomas Christians fought not to recover liturgy but to get the self-government. But what for is the self-government if not to recover and to protect its genuine heritage? Syro-Malabar bishops wrote on 6th Dec.1938 to Cardinal Tisserant who communicated the decision of Pope Pius XI for the restoration of liturgy: "If it be your mind that we should change our existing Missal and Breviary which have been in use for centuries, thus bringing about momentous changes in our Syro-Malabar Rite, it would be a regrettable surprise to us and to the flock entrusted to our care." Mar Augustine Kandathil saw restoration as a hindrance to the pastoral life of priests: "Our priests in charge of souls, unlike the monks remaining in the monasteries, are also overburdened with various pastoral duties...The Syro-Malabar rite, as distinct

from the pure Chaldean rite, is about three and half centuries old and has been recognized as a distinct rite".^[26] It is to be observed that the same Pope who established the hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church took the decision to restore its liturgy.

Foreign Liturgy

OE 6 asks to preserve the legitimate liturgical rite. Those who oppose the restoration of the East Syrian liturgy began to argue that as Latin liturgy is foreign so also East Syrian liturgy is foreign because it was introduced here in the fourth century by foreign settlers. Cardinal Parecatil writes: "The Chaldean Rite was imported into this country in the fourth century, and for us Indians the Chaldean Rite is as foreign as the Latin Rite which the Portuguese tried to impose on us, the Thomas Christians, in the 16th century. Later we had our own Rite, namely, the Syro-Malabar Rite exclusively".^[27] We can notice still biased view in the statement of Fr. Narikulam: "The Chaldean liturgical tradition was introduced only in the fourth century and the worshipping community has consistently felt down the centuries that it is alien to the culture of the land"^[28] He does not give any evidence to prove his assertion. St.Thomas Christians always loved and lived this liturgy. The letter of three Thomas Christian faithful to Pope Gregory XIII is a clear proof for it: "Our prayers are in Syriac or the Chaldean language which was handed over to us by our Lord

[26] *The Letter of Mar Augustine Kandathil to Cardinal Tisserant* on June, 1955.

[27] Mar Joseph Cardinal Parecatil,
Liturgy Ente Drushtiyil (Ernakulam 1987) 35-36,191-192.

[28] *Editorial to Star Documentation 12* {New Directives on Syro-Malabar Liturgy: Study p. iii

St. Thomas and we and our predecessors have been taught this language.”^[29] It was the people who were using the East Syrian liturgy, who resisted the attempt of the foreign missionaries at latinization in defence of the East Syrian Liturgy.

Early History

Those who find the foreign origin of the East Syrian liturgy conveniently ignore the early history of the liturgy. Liturgy is the patristic synthesis on the basis of Sacred Scripture and Tradition. Therefore they developed only in a few centers where there were Church Fathers. Those who did not develop their own liturgy gladly accepted their liturgy from centers, which were related to them geographically, politically, racially or hierarchically or in some other way.^[30] The Churches of Edessa, Persia and India claim St. Thomas as their Father in faith since they received faith from him directly or through his disciples. They should have received the same liturgy though in flexible form. When the same liturgy assumed definite form in Edessa, which was the theological center of the Churches of St. Thomas, they including the St. Thomas Christians of India accepted it as their own liturgy. By this they were not receiving a new liturgy but the same liturgy in its definite form instead of the flexible form. This could happen even before the establishment of hierarchical relation with other Churches of St. Thomas because of the communication means and of the strong sense

of Thomistic affinity with them. Late when these Churches became one under one head it was called East Syrian Church because Syriac was its liturgical language. Since Syriac was also called Chaldean language, the Church was also known as Chaldean Church. There exists since the 16th century a particular Church in the name of Chaldean Church, the term ‘Chaldean’ may cause confusion and therefore it is better to use ‘East Syrian’ to qualify the liturgy. That may be the reason why the typical edition of the Taksa entitled “according to the use of Church of the East Syrians of Malabar” It stresses the East Syrian character of the Church and its liturgy.

Nobody knows about an Indian liturgy different from the East Syrian one, which existed here when the Portuguese came here. The reason why some fabricated the claim that 4th century settlers brought priesthood and liturgy was not only to deny the East Syrian heritage and liturgy of this Church but also to justify the new liturgical texts which are neither East Syrian nor purely Latin, but a new creation. 1980 doc. reminds: “As there cannot be an autogenous Church but always to be derived from a preceding one, so also there cannot be an autogenous liturgy”^[31] This document concludes with the call to promote double integration which is necessary for any liturgical reform, namely, 1) in an Eastern Christian direction through deeper contact with the Syriac liturgical, theological and spiritual tradition, 2) in an Indian direction.^[32]

[29] Giamil, *Genuine Relations*, p.85-86

[30] Fr. Placid J Podipara, *Reflections on Liturgy*, (Kottayam 1983).19-20

[31] *Roman Documents*, p.35

[32] Id. P.54

Some even argue that this is not an Oriental Church.

Fruit of Renewal

Some even claim that the unauthorized liturgical texts are the fruit of renewal of the liturgy and are based on the policy of SMBC that restoration, revision and adaptation of the liturgy should go together. Against those who quoted in the doc. a Response to justify liturgical changes, *Final Judgement* says: "There are many more texts of the Holy See than the select ones relied on by the authors of A Response, and with regard to the Eastern Rites the Council's first call was for the restoration of the tradition. To brand such a restoration a backward move is to totally misunderstand the nature of liturgical reform..."^[33] It states again that Vati.II also calls for restoration of the authentic tradition where it has been lost (OE 6 and 12).^[34] 1985 doc. sees it necessary as the basis of growth: "It is in no way opposed to seeing the Malabar liturgy evolve in accord with the norms of Vat.II (SC 4, OE 6). But all liturgical development operates not in vacuum".^[35] The 'return to the sources' is not definitely a "going back" but an attempt of the Church to find its roots.^[36] The instruction teaches: "The Organic progress, in every Church sui juris, implies taking into account first of all the roots from which the heritage of these Churches was initially

developed ... secondly, the manner in which such traditions were transmitted, adapting to the various circumstances and places but maintained in a coherent organic continuity".^[37] It again states: "The first requirement of every Eastern liturgical renewal, as is also the case for liturgical reform in the West, is that re-discovering full fidelity to their own liturgical traditions, benefiting from their riches and eliminating that which has altered their authenticity. Such heedfulness is not subordinate to but precedes so-called updating".^[38]

Lack of Knowledge

OE 6 exhorts that the members of the Eastern Churches should attain an ever greater knowledge and a more exact use of liturgical rites and their established way of life. A good number of our priests are trained in Latin seminaries and are denied occasion to study their ecclesial heritage. Even in seminaries and formation houses the situation is not often ideal. Many orientals have lost their consciousness because of their Latin formation. Western oriented intellectuals have nothing to contribute to a restoration of the oriental heritage. A clergy trained in an authentic Eastern way is a prerequisite for a genuine restoration of the Eastern patrimony. A genuine training of the clergy should be coupled with a genuine catechization of the faithful. Liturgy is the source of spirituality,

[33] Id p.120

[34] Id p.120

[35] Id.p.119

[36] Id.p.114

[37] Id. p.177

[38] Id.p.182

theology and discipline of life. It is in the liturgy that the mystery of Christ is celebrated. the aim of catechesis is to lead a person to understand the mystery of Christ in all its dimensions. So catechesis should be based on liturgy. The catechism given to laity is sometimes misleading or is conducive to create aversion to anything oriental or liturgical. It is under this background we have to understand the letter of Cardinal Loudusamy to all the local hierarchs on May 5, 1988: "One can never insist enough on the need to introduce, where it does not exist, and to strengthen where it does the study of the liturgy, especially the Syrian liturgical heritage, according to the best contemporary methods, and also the present-day pastoral exigencies in India. This is especially necessary in seminaries and houses of religious formation. Moreover, importance must be given to the study of the Syriac language, for the purpose of penetrating the heart of the liturgical and patristic sources of the tradition in their full, rich sense. Only through knowledge of the total ecclesial and theological context of the tradition can the liturgy itself be fully understood. A similar penetration into the meaning of the liturgy should be provided to faithful, according to their needs and circumstances, by means of a precise and regular catechesis. One must not forget the golden principle "lex orandi, les credendi".^[39] The revision of the liturgy should necessarily occur only after careful study in various aspects such theological, historical and pastoral.^[40] In modifying ancient liturgical

practice the element to be introduced should be coherent with the contextual meaning in which it is placed. It must be verified that the new change is homogenous with the symbolic language, with the images and the style specific to the liturgy of the particular Church.^[41]

OE 6 prescribes that Latin religious institutes which have oriental members should have special oriental provinces. According to CCEO, the members of the institutes of consecrated life are bound to observe faithfully their own rite and to acquire a greater knowledge and more perfect practice of it. There are some orders and Congregations who give importance to meaningful celebration of the liturgy. But there are others who do not care for the identity of the Church and liturgy. Although Oriental provinces of certain Latin Religious Orders have come into being the result is as a whole negative, mainly because these members are not given oriental formation. Instead of trying to imbibe with the oriental spirit and knowledge a majority of them still continue to live as Latin Religious members and even try to impose their own way of thinking on the Orientals.

Some try to justify the unauthorized changes as inculturation or indianization. Inculturation in the liturgy should be seen in the background of the Gospel and the Church. The Church meets different cultures in different places and tries to transfer the cultural values through their integration to Christianity. The Church transcends all cultures. Pope John Paul

[39] ID.P.141-142

[40] Instruction No.19

[41] Id.no.20

II enunciates two guiding principles in his encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio*, namely compatibility with the Gospel and communion with the universal Church (No.54). Inculturation must by no means compromise the distinctiveness and integrity of the Christian faith (No.52). When faith is conveyed to a people in a particular culture, primacy remains always with the content of faith. The point of reference is man in the culture, not culture itself. The Church cannot compromise divine Tradition for the sake of preserving a culture. All the liturgies possess some essential features and common elements. They are to be retained (No.53). Each liturgy has also distinct uniform theological tradition. The theology celebrated in a particular liturgy is indigenous to that ecclesial tradition.

The question of inculturation arises when a new Christian community with different culture is formed. They try to express their Christian faith in new ways and forms, which accord with their cultural tradition. Protestants and Latin Church were introduced in India after the Western colonization. They need inculturation.

The promoters of inculturation should bear in mind three facts: 1) India is multicultural. There are several distinct cultures in India. There are also different races here which fight to promote their own culture and identity. 2) There are very many religions in India. Christians come from several religious and cultural backgrounds. For many, inculturation is equal to Hinduization or integrating Hindu

religious elements into the liturgy. Therefore 1980 doc. warns: "There are inseparable and radical differences between the ethico-religious perspective of Hinduism – of any Hinduism- and that of Christianity. It does nobody any good -and is contrary to the truth- to pass under silence or pretend to ignore such differences, cutting out for oneself a Hinduism according to one's wishes, made out to suit Christianity or accumulating false parallels which cannot convince anyone and which manifest only superficiality and cultural "approximation" thereby being unjust to Hinduism no less than to Christianity itself and laying oneself open, not unfoundedly, to the accusation or the suspicion on the part of sensitive Hindus of "spiritual imperialism and of insincere manoeuvres".^[42]

The task is not so much of taking new things from Hindu heritage but of deepening in every way values that are already given in Christianity. This discovery is the task to which the Church in India cannot renounce. It is the great service which the Churches can offer to the universal Church. 1980 doc. enumerates some of the elements of spirituality, which are to be rediscovered and highlighted.^[43]

There are meaningful practices, which are common to the followers of different religions in India and are not associated with any particular religion. Such elements could be accepted by Christianity.

Christians should keep their identity. Buddhism and Jainism were absorbed into Hinduism. In China Christianity was absorbed

[42] Id,p.49

[43] Id,p.49

into Buddhism because it imitated the Buddhist way of life and worship. If Christianity imitate on a large scale Hindu practices and religious thoughts, it may disappear as a Hindu sect.

An incultured ancient community

One thing, which has to be borne in mind, is that the Church of St. Thomas Christianity is an ancient religion in India. It existed here long before Islam and Zoroastrians came to India. St. Thomas Christians consider their faith, liturgy and mode of life as their heritage from St. Thomas the Apostle. Christianity with its way of life and liturgy has become part of the Indian culture. The form of worship which they have been following since the early centuries has become natural to this Church and has become their patrimony. St. Thomas Christians developed a style of ecclesial life which was conditioned by the social, cultural and religious background of that period.

They did not distinguish themselves from other people in dress, food, habits, profession, mode of behaviour between the members of the family, social life, architecture of the house etc. In the caste ridden society they stood next to Brahmins and had several customs common with Brahmins. For example, a new baby was fed with powdered gold mixed with honey. Eleven months after the birth of the child, it was ceremoniously fed with boiled rice for the first time. Children going to school for the first time were made to write with their finger the first letters of Alphabet on raw rice. Ceremonies connected with marriage such as ceremonial bath, dowry system, feeding the bride and bridegroom with sweets before and after marriage, tying the tali around the neck

of the bride, not going to the church for hour days after marriage, *mantrakodi*, reception of the couples in the pandel after the marriage holding *koluvilakku* and vessel with water and rice etc were inspired by Brahmin customs. *Kalamezhuthu* and *Nilayana* and *Mailanchi* were Hindu customs. Husband is given sweet milk which he sips and gives to his bride as do the Brahmin grooms at marriage. During the stay of bridegroom in the bride's house (*virunnu*) he used to leave a portion of the food on his plate for his wife, a strictly Hindu custom. Mother after the birth of the child would not enter the church for 40 days. Brahmin women also observe a similar custom. *Pula* and *Chattam* are in name and nature Hindu, but christianized by the prayer and blessing of priests. *Pula* means defilement. All the near relatives of a dead person are defiled for a given period of time. At the end of this period they would bathe and offer sacrifice and would hold a feast. This feast is called *pulakuli*. There are commemorations of the dead on 17th, 28th and 40th days. *Chattam* from Sanskrit and *Sradha* is the feast celebrated on the anniversary day of the death of ancestors. The food and sweets used at these days are those traditional among high caste Hindus. To those who offer money on feast days a little fried rice (*nercha*) is given, which the devotees eat with great devotion. This reminds of the *prasada* of the temple signifying that the deity is pleased with the offering. As in the front of the unchristian temples, church has flagstaff. Churches were built externally like Hindu temples except for the cross on the roof and in the open air. The paraphernalia like umbrellas, musical instruments were the same as those used in Hindu temples. Church

processions, festal solemnities and pilgrimages looked like their counterparts among the Hindus. Like the Hindus, fasts began with bath. Yagom administered Church properties. This system was similar to that of the Hindus. Wife has to wear the tali always during the lifetime of her husband. At her death it is buried with her or is deposited in the treasury of the Church. It is a Brahmin custom. Christian names receive modification as to suit Malabar taste. Similar transformation of Hindu names is common. Christian priests used to attach to the bodies of sick persons a piece of palm leaf or paper on which were written verses from Holy Scriptures. This is also a Hindu custom. The use of lighted lamps in connection with celebrations is also a Hindu custom. These examples show that St. Thomas Christians did not appear foreigners in this country. They could not be distinguished from non-Christians except in few respects, which were specifically Christians.

The prayer formulas were kept intact in Syriac; but the contexts in which they used were indianized. We could say that Syro-Malabarians were Christian in faith, Indian in culture and Oriental in worship.

Is it latinization?

Inculturation is not a very vital issue in this inculturated Apostolic Church. What is really happening is that the incultured elements are slowly disappearing and Westernization is taking their place in the life of the faithful. Some want to justify some newly introduced unauthorized changes in imitation of the Latin Church in the name of inculturation. In this connection may I recall what Msgr Claudio

Gujerotti said in the 1996 Roman Synod of the Syro-Malabar Bishops: "I ask myself above all: are we not risking to consider latinization and inculturation synonymously? When one holds that a liturgical element is Latin in origin, this does not mean that it is Indian. Or shall we conclude that Portuguese liturgical sensitivity, and European sensitivity in general, coincides with that of India? It would be perfectly absurd.

Until now, proposals regarding inculturation have been very rare: almost all of the suggested revisions of the Raza have been efforts to preserve certain elements taken from the Latin Rite. This approach can be accepted or not, but it cannot be called inculturation. Celebrating the liturgy "versus populum" is not inculturation, neither is the offertory procession, nor is the announcement of the Mass theme at the beginning, nor the interruption of the g'hantha, nor is the notion of liturgical silence. I am not saying that these elements may not be found in Indian culture or supported with motivations taken from Indian culture; I am saying that it is curious that the suggestions regarding inculturation or liturgical updating coincide with recent usages. How can it be that a Church so rich in tradition and fervour does not have an approach of its own, with its own distinct and original suggestions? This does not mean that the practices alluded to are unacceptable; I am saying, however, that while those who proposed them may have considered them pastorally valid, they cannot be seen as a fruit of inculturation.

These elements, moreover, are almost all of recent Latin origin introduced into the

Latin liturgy after Vatican II, with the exception of the position "versus populum". Which is better defined as "in medio populi" (adopted since antiquity in the Roman Basilicas but not in other areas of the Roman Rite), and the offertory procession which has, however, in all of the original liturgies, its own specific setting. But one wants, therefore, to maintain these practices for pastoral reasons, one is simply saying that a custom appropriated by the Syro-Malabarians has been found helpful, but this is not inculturation. Nor can we say that these practices are residual effects of an older latinization of the Syro-Malabar liturgy, given that none of these elements were practices in the Latin Rite when the Portuguese arrived in India".^[44] Fr.Placid throws light on the cause of these troubles in the Church in

these words: "A people like the present Syro-Malabarians who know nothing of things liturgical or of their traditions welcomes anything that is short, provided that it is presented in the vernacular. Add to this the propaganda that things traditional are not for the modern man, while things Latin are up-to-date."^[45]

To sum up, the Malabar Church has failed to implement the teachings of the decree of II Vatican Council on Oriental Churches regarding liturgy. Many of those who are responsible for restoring the lost identity of this Church are so deeply rooted in Latinism that they are unable to appreciate anything oriental. This situation is bound to change in the course of time.



[44] Fr. Jose Porumneda(ed), *Acts of the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church*, (Kochi 1996).140

[45] Fr. Placid J. Podipara, *St.Thomas Christians and Their Syriac Treasures* (Alleppey 1974) 55

Divinization: the Heart of Theological Anthropology

Dr. Sebastian Vethanath

1.0 Introduction

Man by nature and vocation is a religious being. Beyond physical well-being, material security and pleasure, one has an earnest desire for something beyond. In other words, the quest for God is deeply rooted in the heart of human beings, because they are created by God and for God; and God ever calls them to himself. In human beings there is a divine element dynamically oriented towards God. This divine element is the ultimate cause for human transcendence. One can transcend from this finite world to an infinite divine one. The human capacity for transcendence opens up the horizon of divine-human communion. By divine grace, received through sacramental life and ascetical practices, human beings can attain blissful communion with God.

At every moment of life God invites human beings to have an authentic communion or participation with him. Only through an intimate life of communion with God, can one find the true meaning and fulfilment of one's existence. Human beings realize their true self as much as they are raised by divine grace to God in order to be united with him. The human person is dignified and is made godlike through this communion, which is a gift of divine grace that is to be accepted and accomplished by human effort. Though this communion between God and human being

has its beginning in this world through spiritual progress, its final fulfilment is to be realized in the eschatological existence. This idea of participatory union with God, generally known as divinization, is the end of humanity.

Divinization is a theme of ever importance in human life. It is the core of the religious life and the heart of theological anthropology. By way of prescribed practices, every religion aims at human beings' communion with God. The doctrine of divinization is an important theme in Christian theology. It remains as the central theme of patristic anthropology and its importance is constantly emphasized in contemporary theological discussions and in the magisterial teachings of the Church. The main concern of this article is to give a general presentation of divinization in a limited way, giving a special stress to the Christian understanding of the theme in the Greek, Latin and Syriac traditions.

1.1 Divinization as a General Concept

Divinization is a general concept of great importance, seen in the religious and philosophical traditions of the world. It has a long history in the religious and philosophical experience of human life. Basing on the biblical teachings, the Fathers of the Church developed the doctrine of divinization under the influence of their cultural background.

1.1.1 Divinization in the Religious and Philosophical Traditions of the World

In Hinduism, religious life is a matter of ordering one's life according to the principles and practices which will lead to a better rebirth or even to *mokṣa* (release). The ultimate end of life is communion with God. Although the Vedas, i.e., the sacred knowledge which is held to be the basis of true belief and practice among Hindus, does not reveal any lively expectation of a worthwhile life after death, it places emphasis on an underlying self or soul (*ātman*) which persists through the process of living and dying. *Ātman*, entangled in desire for the world, continues to be reborn at many different levels of appearance, in heavens and hells, as animals or as humans, governed by a natural moral law of karma. To be born as a human is a rare opportunity to advance towards *mokṣa*, release from the round of rebirth^[1].

The Vedic religion aims at achieving the direct union of the individual soul with the soul of *Brahmā* through rituals and spiritual practices, having its anticipation in this life. The nature of this union is variously described. For instance, the *Vi-ññādvaita* of Rāmānuja, a Hindu philosopher and theologian, proposed that the state attained through *mokṣa* is a union of the self with God, whereby the self enjoys *sālokya* (the same place of abode as the Lord), *sānnidya* (presence of God) and *sārūpya* (likeness of God)^[2]. In this union the self,

though still dependent on God, has a distinct nature. *Vi-ññādvaita*'s vision of communion between God and the individual self stands near to the Christian doctrine of divinization.

The *Advaita vedānta* of Sankara, one of the most influential thinkers in the entire history of the Indian religion, envisages a reunion of undifferentiated reality, so that one can legitimately speak of fusion. There exists no difference or duality between Brahman and the self. Brahman is the very self, because he is the reality underlying all appearance. The goal of human life is *mokṣa* which consists in the realization of the unity of the self and the ultimate Reality, i.e., Brahman^[3]. This unity is generally expressed in great sayings such as *tat-tvam-asi* (That Thou art), *aham brahmāsmi* (I am Brahman), *ayam ātmā brahma* (This Self is Brahman)^[4]. According to this school of thinking individual existence is lost in Godly existence. This idea of the fusion of the self into Brahman and the consequent loss of individuality is basically different from the Christian view of the aim of human life which is characterized by a perfect beatitude in the vision of God as a complete and distinct human being.

The Buddhist's *nirvāna* recalls a dying out in the heart of passion, hatred and delusion, inducing a beatific spiritual condition and freedom. According to this all appearance is characterized by *dukkha* (transience), accompanied by suffering. Buddhism does not

[1] Cf. J. BOWKER (ed.), "Hinduism", in *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, Oxford 1997, 431.

[2] Cf. Y. MASHI, *A Comparative Study of Religions*, New Delhi 1990, 175-178.

[3] Cf. J. BOWKER (ed.), "Advaita Vedānta", in *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, 21-22.

[4] Cf. J. BOWKER (ed.), "Mahāvākya", in *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, 602.

believe either in the existence of the soul or in an eternal God. The teachings of Buddhism consists of the Four Noble Truths (the truth of *dukkha* and how to escape it), the Eightfold Path (the root of escaping or enlightenment) and *paticca-samuppāda* (the analysis of twelve-step chain cause which gives rise to entanglement in *samsāra*, the continuing process of reappearance). The aim of life is to move towards enlightenment and to attainment of the cessation of all interaction with manifest appearance, i.e., *nirvāṇa*^[5].

Throughout the Graeco-Roman world the idea of divinization was very strong. The religious thought of the Greeks oscillated between the acceptance of the human condition with its limits and the attempt to transcend it in union with God. *Apotheosis* is the pagan parallel to the concept of divinization. The term *apotheosis* referred to the consecration of heroes, political personages, Hellenistic sovereigns, and notable Roman emperors^[6]. It is the conferring, through official, ritual or iconographic means, of the status of an immortal god upon a mortal person^[7]. The Romans generally favoured the *apotheosis* of great leaders after death. For example, Julius Caesar was proclaimed a god among the gods and in ca. 29 a temple was consecrated to him in the Forum. In the Roman Empire the practise of the deification

of the good emperors and the organization of the imperial cult became general after Augustus^[8]. This practise of divinization of rulers through the conferring of divine status, even in their life time or after death, might have originated from the ancient Oriental view of the king as the representative of God. The Jewish understanding of a king was in line with this same view^[9].

The practice of the elevation of a royal hero to the rank of a god, which is seen in several ancient cultures such as the Sumerian and Egyptian, was the result not of the fact that the diseased monarch acquired divinity, but rather that, being intrinsically divine in part he, at death, relinquished his mortality. His affinity to divinity and the extraordinary power was due to the fact that one of his parents had been a god or goddess, or that he had been infused in infancy with a special divine grace^[10]. The immortalization of heroes was a sign of the acceptance of their goodness or extraordinary powers, in view of keeping them eternal. It need not have resulted from faith in God.

For the Greeks, divinization consisted of restoring the personal *daimon* to its authentic status as an immortal god^[11]. They pursued divinization through *gnosis*, i.e., an attribute of divine knowledge. In the secular Greek philosophical tradition divinization was purely

[5] Cf. J. BOWKER (ed.), "Buddhism", in *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, 172.

[6] Cf. R. TURCAM, "Deification", in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. III, M. Eliade (ed.), New York 1987, 259.

[7] Cf. R. TURCAM, "Apotheosis", in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. I, 359.

[8] Cf. M. ELLIÉ, *A History of Religious Ideas*, vol. II, W. R. Trask (tr.), Chicago 1982, 365-66.

[9] Cf. S. MOWINCKEL, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, vol. I, D. R. Ap. Thomas (tr.), Oxford 1962, 50-80.

[10] Cf. T. H. GASTER, "Heroes", in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. V, 302.

[11] Cf. R. TURCAM, "Deification", in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. III, 260.

a human effort to know one's self, independent of any divine grace or help^[12]. Platonic philosophical tradition emphasized the idea of the 'participation' of the human soul in the Highest Soul. The rational part of the human soul (*nous*) is immortal and can be raised to its origin, i.e., the Highest God. According to Platonism the concept of the imitation of God has to be considered as the most important task in a human being's moral and intellectual life^[13]. The very concept of assimilation to God derives from Plato (427-348/7) whose advice was to fly away from this world to heaven as quickly as possible in order to become like God as far as possible^[14]. The Platonic idea of the dualism between body and soul, and the consequent imprisoned state of the soul in the body led its followers to a heroic spirituality in which ascetic efforts might be made to ensure the soul's liberation and safety^[15].

Due to the influence of the Platonic degradation of the human body, the Gnostic systems of Christian inspiration envisioned only the final restoration of the spirit to its original divine state. The destiny of the soul was to become aware of itself and escape from its oppressors, passing through the

planetary spheres to the truly heavenly realm above¹⁶. Gnosticism understood divinization in the sense of the transformation of those who were akin to God *per naturam*, to the divine life^[17]. It "reduced redemption to a mere re-divinization of the divine germ in the pneumatophores or pneumatics who were considered by the Gnostics to be the only true Christians"^[18]. Against the Gnostic tendency of restricting salvation to a limited group, the Fathers of the Church taught that all human beings, created in the image and likeness of God, are destined to resemble God. For them divinization is accessible to all, not to the chosen few. In opposition to the Gnostic tendency of limiting salvation only to the rational part of the soul, the Fathers advocated divinization to the tripartite nature of the human person, i.e., body, soul and spirit. They developed the same doctrine in terms of the divine-human communion, the central teaching of the Bible.

1.1.2 The Biblical Foundation of Divinization

Divinization is well rooted in the Bible. Its doctrinal foundations are extensive in the Old Testament. Man's creation in the image and likeness of God (cf. *Gen* 1,26) and the

[12] Cf. A. J. FESTUGIÈRE, *L'idéal religieux des Grecs et l'Évangile*, Paris 1981, 52.

[13] Cf. B. T. BILANIUK, "The Mystery of Theosis or Divinization", in *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 195 (1973), 341; P. LANGLOIS, "Greek Philosophy (Religious Aspects)", in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, second edition, vol. VI, B. L. Marthaler (ed.), New York 2003, 443-450; J. PÉPIN, *De la philosophie ancienne à la théologie patristique*, London 1986, 39-64.

[14] Cf. PLATO, *The Republic*, vol. II, VI: 13; X: 12, P. Shorey (tr.), London 1956, 69, 487.

[15] Cf. J. BOWKER (ed.), "Soul", in *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, 916.

[16] Cf. R. M. GRANT, "Gnostic Spirituality", in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the 12th Century*, B. McGinn et al. (eds.), New York 1985, 44.

[17] Cf. B. STUDER, "Divinization", in *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, vol. I, A. di Berardino (ed), Cambridge 1992, 242.

[18] B. T. BILANIUK, "The Mystery of Theosis or Divinization", 347-348.

call of the chosen people, through the Covenant (cf. *Lev* 26,12) to a closer communion with God, prepared for the theme^[19]. Safeguarding the absolute transcendence and distinction of God from creatures, the Old Testament highlights the idea of divine-human communion. The theme of a banquet (cf. *Gen* 18,1-6; *Ex* 24,9-11; *Isa* 25,6-12) is an expression of this communion. Divinization in terms of the promised state of immortality or incorruptibility of the righteous is a repeated theme in the *Book of Wisdom*: “God created us for incorruption and made us in the image of his own eternity” (*Wis* 2,23; cf. *Wis* 3,4).

The doctrine of divinization puts down deeper roots in the New Testament. The transcendent and invisible God of the Old Testament becomes immanent and visible in Jesus Christ and invites man to a more authentic life of communion. The image of the vine and the branches (cf. *Jn* 15,1-17) refers to a life of real union with God, as expressed in Jesus’ prayer: “As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us” (*Jn* 17,21). The central teaching of the New Testament is the incarnation of the Son of God and the subsequent human beings’ becoming children of God (cf. *Jn* 1,12) in and through Christ, animated by the Spirit. This is theologically elaborated primarily in the Pauline writings and

in the first Letter of St. John. God invites human beings to a new life as a pledge and anticipation of future glory (cf. *1 Cor* 13,12; *2 Cor* 3,18; *Gal* 4,5; *1 Jn* 3,1-3). St. Paul uses various expressions to denote participatory union with Christ. For him every human being is called to become ‘mature in Christ’ (*Col* 1,28), to grow into the ‘fullness of Christ’ (*Eph* 4,13), and to acquire the ‘mind of Christ’ (*1 Cor* 2,16). The Pauline idea of the ‘recapitulation of all things in Christ’ (*Eph* 1,10) may be considered as a synonym for divinization. St. John, while teaching about the divine sonship, is quite sure about the human attainment of the divine likeness (cf. *1 Jn* 3,1-3). St. Peter’s expression of ‘participation in the divine nature’ (*2 Pet* 1,4) is another clear cut indication of human divinization.

1.1.3 Divinization in the Christian Theology

Divinization is a well developed theme in the Christian theology. It belongs to the common Christian heritage^[20]. It is one of the fundamental themes in Christian anthropology, especially elaborated under this title in the Eastern tradition^[21]. Though the Christian doctrine of divinization was primarily developed by the Greek Fathers, its fundamental tenets are found in both the Latin and the Syriac traditions.

[19] Cf. D. L. BALAS, “Divinization”, in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, E. Ferguson (ed.), New York 1998, 338.

[20] Cf. E. G. FARRUGIA, “Christianity as a Society of Mourners: Introducing Eastern Theology”, in *Catholic Eastern Churches: Heritage and Identity*, P. Pallath (ed.), Rome 1994, 52.

[21] Cf. I. H. DALMAIS et al., “Divinisation”, in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, tom. III, fondé par M. Viller et al., Paris 1960, 1370-1459; E. BARTOS, *Deification in Eastern Orthodox Theology: An Evaluation and Critique of the Theology of Dumitru Staniloae*, Carlisle, Cumbria 1999; J. GROSS, *The Divinization of the Christian according to the Greek Fathers*, P. A. Onica (tr.), California 2000; N. RUSSELL, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, Oxford 2004.

1.1.3.1 Divinization in the Greek Tradition

Divinization is a typical expression forged by the Greek Fathers to express the central purpose of the human being's life, i.e., participatory union with God. The common term, used by the Greek Fathers to denote human participatory union with God is *th'osis*. It is the participle noun of the word *theōs* which means God: *Th'osis* literally means 'to make god(ly)'. The word *theopoi'sis* also means the same, literally union with God. Many other terms, both Greek and Latin, like, "*aphtharsia*, *methexis*, *koinonia*, *enosis*, *glorificatio*, *profectus ad Deum*"^[22] also express the doctrine of divinization.

The Fathers expressed this union with God as "a Christocentric and eschatological concept, expressed in platonic language, but basically independent of philosophical speculation"^[23]. Based on a biblical foundation, the Greek Fathers developed the doctrine of divinization against the Hellenistic philosophical background. The Greek definition of the deity as possessing immortality^[24] and the Platonic notion of participation^[25] influenced on the Christian usage of the term divinization. The Apostolic Fathers developed the idea of

human beings' intimate union with God through the divine gift of immortality (*aphtharsia*) in an eschatological perspective. For them the gift of immortality is assured by Jesus' resurrection and by the Eucharist and is conferred in the Lord's *parousia*^[26].

In Greek patristic thought, Christ is the source and centre of divinization, an idea summarized in the dictum: 'God became man so that man might become divine'. Christ's humanity is a deified humanity. Just as divinity and humanity are mingled in Christ's incarnation, divinization involves a mingling of human nature with the divine nature. Christians are called to participate in Christ's divinity and to attain a more authentic humanity^[27]. The image of God in human beings can only be fully understood through Jesus Christ. Being the Logos (cf. *Jn* 1,1), he is also the living model according to whom every human being is created. He is perfect man and perfect God. In him, divinity and humanity – the model and the image – are united in a perfect personal unity, and human beings find their ultimate destiny in communion with him^[28]. Christ is the image of God and of man. He is the true revelation of God among human beings and the true human response to the divine vocation, i.e., God in man and man in God^[29]. In

[22] B. STUDER, "Divinization", in *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, vol. I, 242.

[23] J. MEYENDORFF, "Theosis in the Eastern Christian Tradition", in *Christian Spirituality III: Post Reformation and Modern*, L. Dupré and D. E. Saliers (eds.), New York 1989, 471.

[24] Cf. D. L. BALAS, "Divinization", in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 338.

[25] Cf. P. LANGLOIS, "Greek Philosophy (Religious Aspects)", in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, second edition, vol. VI, 443-450; G. O'COLLINS and E. G. FARRUGIA, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, Edinburgh 2000, 204.

[26] Cf. B. STUDER, "Divinization", in *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, vol. I, 242.

[27] Cf. K. PARRY, "Deification", in *Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Christianity*, K. Parry et al. (eds.), Oxford 1999, 159.

[28] Cf. J. MEYENDORFF, "Theosis in the Eastern Christian Tradition", 472.

[29] Cf. G. WAINWRIGHT, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*, New York 1980, 83.

addition to the Johannine teaching on the Logos as the source of divine life (cf. *Jn* 1,1-4), the Fathers might have exploited the Pauline doctrine of incorporation into Christ (cf. *Eph* 1,10) in the development of the doctrine of divinization^[30].

For the entire patristic tradition, knowledge of God implies participation in God. It is never merely an intellectual knowledge, but involves the transformation of the entire human being by divine grace. Participation in the divine life is not only a gift of grace to be accepted, but a task to be accomplished by a free human effort. It is a free and conscious experience of communion with God, enjoyed by Adam before the Fall – the state which was restored in Jesus Christ and in which God wishes human beings to live^[31].

It should be noted that the Christian doctrine of *th'osis* does not involve any pantheistic view of identifying God with the world or man. The distinction between God and man is always there in the doctrine of divinization. Communion with God does not suppress God's transcendence. In the Eastern tradition, both the transcendence of the divine essence and the reality of human communion with God are maintained through the distinction between God's essence and energies. While God's essence is always beyond the comprehension of human beings, one can have communion with God through divine

energies, thanks to the co-operation with the grace of God. The integrity of the person is maintained with its uniqueness and diversity in the process of communion with God. This is possible, because God is not an impersonal, transcendent One, but the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, united without confusion and manifested to creatures as an authentic reality through the experience of love^[32]. Human beings are invited to have a perfect life of communion with the Holy Trinity in an authentic and personal manner. V. Lossky writes of this communion:

To know the mystery of the Trinity in its fullness is to enter into perfect union with God and to attain to the deification of the human creature; in other words, to enter into the divine life, the very life of the Holy Trinity and to become, in St. Peter's words, 'partakers of the divine nature' – (2 *Pet* 1,4)^[33].

Human beings are called and freely given the grace to attain the likeness of God, and to become 'partner in the life of God'^[34].

St. Justin the Martyr (2nd Cent), St. Irenaeus of Lyons (140-202), St. Clement of Alexandria (150-215), Origen (185-254), St. Athanasius (296-373), St. Basil the Great (330-379), St. Gregory of Nazianzus (329-390), St. Gregory of Nyssa (331-395), St. Cyril of Alexandria (+444), St. Maximus the Confessor (580-662) are some of the pioneers who have

[30] Cf. J. GROSS, *The Divinization of the Christian according to the Greek Fathers*, 82-92.

[31] Cf. J. MEYENDORFF, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*, New York 1983, 140.

[32] Cf. J. MEYENDORFF, "Theosis in the Eastern Christian Tradition", 476.

[33] V. LOSSKY, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, Cambridge 1973, 67.

[34] Cf. E. G. FARRUGIA, *Introduzione alla teologia orientale*, Roma 1997, 9.

dealt with the doctrine of divinization. St. Irenaeus was the first to develop the theological synthesis of divinization. He expressed it as follows: "God the Logos became what we are, in order that we may become what He himself is"^[35]. Irenaeus elaborated his teaching on divinization in opposition to the Gnostic view of salvation of an elite. For him *th'osis* was envisaged by God at the moment of creation as its final goal. Human beings' communion with God in this world through Christ and his Spirit is an assurance of the beatitude of immortality^[36].

The Alexandrian school, especially Clement and Origen in their attempt to defeat Gnosticism, Christianized the Greek ideal of the assimilation of man to God by means of knowledge and asceticism. B. T. Bilaniuk summarizes this assimilation:

The true *gnosis* consists in the perfect understanding of the heavenly doctrine revealed by the incarnate Logos. The *gnosis* which involves the whole man, is a result of both human effort and the grace of God. This *gnosis*, which is the contemplation of the supreme being, assimilate man to God, who is the source of all perfection, and confers upon man impassibility, immortality, wisdom and love^[37].

The assimilation to God proposed by Clement and Origen was too intellectual and did not emphasise the aspect of union with God.

The classical formulation of the doctrine of divinization is found in Athanasius: "He [the Word of God] became man, that we may become gods",^[38]. Athanasius explicitated the divinization of creation in terms of union with God the Father, through the Son in the Holy Spirit. Against the Arian controversy of denying the divinity of Christ, Athanasius upheld that the Son is God and he could divinize creation^[39]. Cyril's teaching on divinization represents a considerable advance on Athanasius. Cyril expressed the doctrine in the context of the movement between the divine descent and the human ascent. According to him human participation in God has ontological and dynamic aspects. In its ontological dimension human beings are raised from non-existence to createdness. In its dynamic level participation is realized through the sacraments, especially those of Baptism and the Eucharist^[40].

Taking inspiration from the Alexandrians the Cappadocian Fathers adapted the doctrine of divinization to a Platonic understanding of Christianity as the attainment of likeness to God as far as it is possible for human nature.

[35] IRENAEUS OF LYONS, *Contra Haereses*, V, *Patrologia Graeca* 7, J. P. Migne (ed.), Paris 1857, 1120.

[36] Cf. B. T. BILANIUK, "The Mystery of Theosis or Divinization", 348; M. AUBINEAU, "Incorruptibilité et divinization selon saint Irénée", in *Recherches de science religieuse* 44, Paris (1956), 25-52.

[37] B. T. BILANIUK, "The Mystery of Theosis or Divinization", 349; cf. N. RUSSELL, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 121-154.

[38] ATHANASIUS OF ALEXANDRIA, *De Incarnatione* 54: 3; *Sources Christianae* 199, C. Kannengiesser (tr.), Paris 2000, 458.

[39] Cf. B. T. BILANIUK, "The Mystery of Theosis or Divinization", 351.

[40] Cf. N. RUSSELL, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 191.

While Gregory of Nyssa gave emphasis to the concept of participation, Basil and Gregory of Nazianus emphasized on the ascent of the soul to God through the imitation of the incarnate life of Christ. This imitation or participation consists in overcoming the passions and freeing the soul from the constraints of corporeal life, and also in putting on Christ in Baptism. For them attainment to the likeness of God demands both moral and sacramental uprightness. However the Cappadocian Fathers were conscious of upholding the gap between the created and uncreated orders of reality. For them God, in his essence, remains utterly beyond human grasp^[41].

Passing through the initial stages of growth the doctrine of divinization found its maturity in Maximus the Confessor who conceived it as God's gift of himself for humanity through participation in the divine energies. Divinization was central to his theological vision. It is the purpose and goal of creation^[42]. The above-mentioned description about the development of the Christian doctrine of divinization in the Greek patristic tradition can be concluded with N. Russell's observation:

Until the end of the fourth century the metaphor of deification develops along two distinct lines: on the one hand, the transformation of humanity in principle as a consequence of the Incarnation; on

the other, the ascent of the soul through the practice of virtue. The former, broadly characteristic of Justin, Irenaeus, Origen, and Athanasius, is based on St. Paul's teaching on incorporation into Christ through baptism and implies a realistic approach to deification. The latter, typical of Clement and the Cappadocians, is fundamentally Platonic and implies a philosophical or ethical approach. By the end of the fourth century the realistic and philosophical strands begin to converge. In Cyril the realistic approach becomes more spiritualized through the use he makes of 2 *Pet* 1,4; in Maximus the philosophical approach comes to be focused more on ontological concerns under the influence of his post-Chalcedonian Christology^[43].

The basis of the Greek patristic teachings on divinization is Christ's incarnation and the consequent human participatory union with God. The Greek Fathers expressed this union in terms of human beings' transformation or ascension to the likeness of God through the practice of virtues and the sacramental life. Based on the Johannine teaching of Logos as the source of life (cf. *Jn* 1,1-4) and the Pauline doctrine of incorporation into Christ (cf. *Eph* 1,10), the Fathers developed divinization in their own cultural background.

[41] Cf. N. RUSSELL, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 233.

[42] Cf. N. RUSSELL, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 263-295.

[43] N. RUSSELL, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 14.

1.1.3.2 Divinization in the Latin and Syriac Traditions

In the writings of Tertullian^[44] (155-220), Hilary of Poitiers^[45] (315-367/8), and Augustine of Hippo^[46] (354-430) one can find clear indications about divinization in terms of human communion with God through the mediation of Christ^[47]. Centred on the doctrine of divine grace, the Latin theology placed more emphasis on moral holiness through the elimination of sin than on liberation from moral corruption^[48] and understood divinization in terms of divine adoption, divine sonship, justification, Trinitarian indwelling, salvation, and sanctification^[49]. It is mainly the result of the proper role of the gift of divine grace in man. K. Rahner explicates that sinful and finite man finds God's divinizing favour always and in any way in his grace. This grace is made open to human beings through the incarnation of the Son of God for the divinization of the world, uniting them with the life and death of Christ through an incarnational, sacramental and ecclesiological character^[50].

The word *deificatio*, the equivalent word for divinization in the Latin tradition, comes from two terms *Deus* (= God) and *facio* (= to make). It is the 'act of deifying'. Deify means 'to make a god of' or 'to exalt to the position of a deity' or 'to render godlike or of a divine nature'. Deification is the condition of having been deified or rendering participation in the divine nature to any one. As John Scot Erigène observes, though the term *deificatio* was rarely used with the Latins they did not ignore its significance. It signified the union between God and human beings in an absolute manner, effecting a total passage of soul and body to the divinity^[51].

In the Syriac tradition the work known under the title of the *Odes of Solomon* deals with many important themes connected with the doctrine of divinization such as divine sonship and new life through the action of the Holy Spirit, union with God and sharing in the perfection of the divinity^[52], the human putting on of Christ^[53], clothing ourselves in his holiness^[54], the conferring of immortal life^[55], entry into paradise^[56], and participation in the

[44] Cf. TERTULLIAN, *Apologeticum* 11: 1-2, 10; PL 1, J. P. Migne (ed.), Paris 1844, 332a-333a, 335a.

[45] Cf. HILARY OF POITIERS, *De Trinitate* 9: 4, *Patrologia Latina* 10, J. P. Migne (ed.), Paris 1845, 284a.

[46] Cf. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *Epistola* 10: 2, *Patrologia Latina* 33, J. P. Migne (ed.), Paris 1841, 74; *Sermo* 188: 4, *Patrologia Latina* 38, J. P. Migne (ed.), Paris 1841, 909.

[47] Cf. N. RUSSELL, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 326-332; G. BARDY, "Divinisation: chez les pères Latins", in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, tom. III, 1390-1398.

[48] Cf. B. STUDER, "Divinization", in *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, vol. I, 243.

[49] Cf. G. BARDY, "Divinisation: chez les pères Latins", in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, tom. III, 1389.

[50] Cf. K. RAHNER (ed.), "Grace", in *Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, New York 1975, 591.

[51] Cf. J. SCOT (Erigène), "Grâce 'reductio' et 'deificatio'", in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, tom. VI, 752-753.

[52] Cf. *Odes of Solomon* 36: 1-6.

[53] Cf. *Odes of Solomon* 7: 4; 13: 12.

[54] Cf. *Odes of Solomon* 13: 3.

[55] Cf. *Odes of Solomon* 28: 7.

[56] Cf. *Odes of Solomon* 11: 16.

Trinitarian life^[57]. Syriac tradition understands divinization essentially linked with the idea of mutual exchange between the divine and human natures through Christ's incarnation. This theme of mutual exchange is very clear in the writings of Aphrahat^[58] (+345) and Ephrem^[59] (+373), two great writers of the undivided Church of the Syriac tradition.

The terms used to denote divinization in the Syriac tradition are *metalābhānutā* (ܡܬܠܐܒܗܢܘܬܐ = deification, the state of being made partaker of the divine nature) and *malābhānutā* (ܡܠܐܒܗܢܘܬܐ = deification). These terminologies are derived from the noun *alāhā* (ܐܠܗܐ=God). *Alah* (ܐܠܗ), the denominative verb of the pael conjugation of *alāhā* means 'to deify' or 'to attribute divine power'. The word *malābhānā* (ܡܠܐܒܗܢܐ) means 'deifying' or 'making divine', 'making a partner of the divine nature'^[60].

It is true that the great exegetes of the school of Antiochene such as Diodore of Tarsus (+394), Theodore of Mopsuestia (+428), and Nestorius (+451) in their attempt to uphold the complete and perfect humanity of Christ against Apollinarius' heresy of denying Christ's full humanity, found difficulty in giving a satisfactory account of the way in which the divine and human natures in Christ constitute the One Person. It led them to confusion in understanding divinization in terms of the intermingling of the divine and human natures.

The assertion of the two natures and the two persons of Christ attributed to Nestorius, as we understand today, was only a misunderstanding of terms. In fact Nestorius had never made a division in the person of Christ, on the contrary he continually affirmed his belief in the oneness of Christ. He had never denied Mary's motherhood of the Son of God. For him she was the mother of the human nature of Jesus who had been united in her womb with the divine nature of the eternal Logos. The title *theotokos*, as M. V. Anastos remarks:

meant that Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, was in a strict sense the mother of the humanity of Jesus, which had been united in her womb with the divine nature of the eternal Logos. No one ever suggested that Mary was the mother of the divine nature of Jesus at the moment of conception, and that, by reason of the closeness of union between the divine and human natures in Christ (the *communicatio idiomatum*), she might then be called the Mother of God. For, all agreed, the flesh to which she gave birth was that of the divine Logos, and the Jesus Christ she bore was God as well as man^[61].

The Christology of the Church of East is in fact more subtle, asserting that there is in Christ a duality of natures and of hypostases,

[57] Cf. *Odes of Solomon* 19: 1-5.

[58] Cf. APHRAHAT, *Demonstratio* VI: 9, J. Parisot (ed.), *Patrologia Siriaca* I, Paris 1894, 275-278.

[59] Cf. ST. EPHREM, *Hymns on Faith* 5: 17.

[60] Cf. J. P. SMITH, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, Oxford 1957, 17, 247, 311.

[61] Cf. M. V. ANASTOS, "Nestorius was Orthodox", in *Studies in Byzantine Intellectual History*, M. V. Anastos, London 1979, 121-22.

but a single person^[62]. Therefore in the writings of later scholars especially of Babai the Great (569-628) who wrote a systematic Christology for the Church of the East, there are references to the doctrine of divinization in terms of the exchange formula of divine human-natures. According to him the Son of God is the one *parsopa* (person) having the two natures in their proper *qnome*. Both natures have their properties without mixture, separation and independence. They are united in the one *parsopa* of the Word^[63].

1.1.3.3 Divinization in the Later Theological Period

In the 13th and 14th centuries the doctrine of divinization received more attention through the writings of Gregory Palamas (1296-1359) and Nicolas Cabasilas (1322-?). Gregory Palamas emphasized the experiential side of divinization. Palamas, by making a real distinction between God's essence and energies, and by avoiding any appearance of pantheism, upheld the idea of participation in the divine life, through God's energies^[64]. A sacramental life of communion with God advocated by N. Cabasilas^[65] was the

fourteenth century contribution to divinization.

Contemporary theology provides various insights into the doctrine of divinization. In the Orthodox tradition P. Nellas emphasized the Christocentric dimension of deification. For him the anthropological meaning of deification is the Pauline theology of Christification^[66]. Scholars like J. Zizioulas, C. Yannaras and J. Meyendorff have brought out the orthodox understanding of the human beings' destiny in greater fidelity to the general trend of patristic anthropology. They considered Christ to be model of true humanity. For J. Zizioulas man's true stature can be realized only through union with God^[67]. According to C. Yannaras the image of God in human beings implies the potentiality both to respond to God's call and to live a life of union with Christ^[68]. In J. Meyendorff's view human nature is not a static, autonomous entity but a dynamic reality, determined in its very existence by its relationship to God. He reproduced the general Eastern view of Christian anthropology: "The view of man prevailing in the Christian East is based upon the notion of participation in God. Man has been created not as an autonomous or self-

[62] Cf. D. BRADY and K. PARRY, "Christology", in *Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Christianity*, 121; W. F. MACOMBER, "The Christology of the Synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, A. D. 486", in *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 36, Rome (1970), 120-134.

[63] Cf. G. CHEDIATH, *The Christology of Mar Babai the Great*, Kottayam 1982.

[64] Cf. V. LOSSKY, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, J. H. Erickson and T. E. Bird (eds.), New York 1985, 45-69.

[65] Cf. N. CABASILAS, *The Life in Christ*, C. J. deCatanzaro (tr.), New York 1998.

[66] Cf. P. NELLAS, *Deification in Christ: Orthodox Perspective on the Nature of the Human Person*, N. Russel (tr.), New York 1997, 39.

[67] Cf. J. ZIZIOULAS, "Human Capacity and Human Incapacity: A Theological Exploration of Personhood", in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 28 (1975), 401-447; J. ZIZIOULAS, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, New York 1985.

[68] Cf. C. YANNARAS, *Elements of Faith: An Introduction to Orthodox Theology*, K. Scharm (tr.), Edinburg 1991, 59.

sufficient being; his very nature is truly itself only in as much as it exists in God or in grace”^[69].

In the Western Catholic tradition, P. Teilhard de Chardin’s (1881-1955) concept of the ‘humanization of man’, stands close to divinization. He detected in the logic of the evolution theory an ever-deepening humanization of man. Seeing Christ in all things and all things in Christ was the heart of Chardin’s vision. Man finds his ultimate convergent evolution in Christ, the Omega point^[70]. Making use of Western philosophical approaches, K. Rahner (1904-1984) tried to give a concrete form to the doctrine of divinization. For him the history of the world is a ‘history of deification’ and of the spiritualization of the world^[71]. He understands the doctrine of divinization in relation to God’s self-communication. For him human being is an event of God’s self-communication^[72]. His life in the world is intended to have a relationship with God. He is called to be a partner in God’s life. For K. Rahner, “[God’s] self-communication means, not just producing something by way of efficient causality, but also a unity between God and his creature, then God gives Himself to man as he is himself”^[73]. God’s self-communication reaches

its culmination in the incarnation of the Son of God whereby man receives possibilities for divinization through divine grace. In the person of Christ God becomes closer to man and man can encounter with God. K. Rahner writes of this intimate union and encounter:

God communicates himself by what is no longer simply efficient causality. He makes man share in the very nature of God. He constitutes man as co-heir with the Son himself, called to the eternal life of God face to face, called to receive the direct vision of God, called therefore to receive God’s own life^[74].

Divinization through sacramental life is constantly emphasized in the magisterial teachings of the Church. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that God freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. In and through his Son, God invites human beings to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and heirs of his blessed life^[75]. John Paul II in his apostolic letter *Orientale Lumen* emphasized that the Word took on humanity, in view of making man god. The same Word pours out divinity into the sick heart of humanity, imbuing it with the Father’s Spirit who enables it to become god through grace^[76]. The Pope stressed that deification is

[69] J. MEYENDORFF, *Byzantine Theology*, 138.

[70] Cf. B. DELFGAM, *Evolution: The Theory of Teilhard de Chardin*, New York 1969.

[71] Cf. E. G. FARRUGIA, “Deificazione e teologia moderna”, in *La Civiltà Cattolica* 138 (1987), 242-243.

[72] Cf. K. RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, W. V. Dych (tr.), London 1978, 116-137.

[73] G. VASS, *God and Christ, Understanding Karl Rahner*, vol. III, London 1996, 26.

[74] K. RAHNER (ed.), “Grace”, in *Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, 588.

[75] Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Prologue no. 1, New Delhi 1994.

[76] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Orientale Lumen*, no. 15, 2 May 1995, *Acta Apostolica Sedis* 87 (1995), 745-774.

the process of the recovering of the original beauty of man and a gradual spiritualization of the body and the soul^[77].

Conclusion

The basic principle behind divinization is immortality. From the early times onwards immortality of the soul was an accepted reality in the religious and philosophical traditions. Divinization through immortality and communion with God is an ever important theme, because it is the very aim of human life. It is the heart of theological anthropology,

especially in the Christian tradition. While the Greek Fathers understood divinization in terms of participatory union with God, the Latin Fathers expressed it as human 'sanctification effected through the operation of the divine grace. In the Syriac Fathers' vision divinization was mainly an outcome of the mutual exchange between the divine and human natures, thanks to the incarnation of the Son of God. The different ways of expressing the same doctrine adds to its beauty and richness.



[77] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, "The Body, the Soul and the Holy Spirit", in *Angelus between East and West*, Vatican City 2000, 83-84.

ASCETICISM: AN INNER CONVERSION

Dr. Mathew Anatharackal CMI

Asceticism is the conscious attempt to grow in interior freedom in order to discern and respond to the will of God in every situation. It is a self-abnegation in the true sense, an abnegation which gives up certain positive as well as personal values in this life^[1]. It is relevant for a Christian only in so far as it is consciously related to the paschal mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ^[2]. Asceticism is a goal oriented activity. It is the determination to bring all the features of life into conformity with the pursuit of a primary goal is reflected, for example, in the readiness of Abram to leave home and family in obedience to God's call. A new set of values had to replace the old, and life had to be reoriented accordingly^[3]. It is basically the effort Christians "in training" make to conform their lives to the faith they profess. Asceticism is a disciplined regime that

Christians freely take on in order to fulfill their task.^[4] It is a progressive purification of all elements which hinder man from realizing his life according to his true dignity. Through asceticism man tries to be what a man should be.

Significance and Relevance of Asceticism

The East Syriac tradition is one of the oldest Christian traditions. The origin of Christianity in the eastern countries dates back to the period of the apostolic preaching. The ascetic spirituality of the syro-oriental Christians was in direct continuity with Christ and his apostles. It was influenced by the first Judeo-Christian communities. It is admitted that autonomy and originality was more evident in the syro-oriental asceticism.^[5] The first ascetic about whom we have sure

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- [1] See K. RAHNER, *Spiritual Exercises*, London, 1967, 71. Through their abnegations all monks, Christians or non Christians, hope to be elevated to a better life, spiritual and divine. It also means sacrifice and sacrifice means a return, restitution, and renewal. In Christian monasticism both elements are experienced at the same time. It is cited in T. SPIDLIK, *The Anthropological Aspect of Eastern Monasticism*, in *Oriental Churches Theological Dimensions*, ed., X. KOODAPUZHA, Paurastya Vidyapitham, Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, Publications, Vadavathoor, Kottayam, 1988, 164.
 - [2] See B. HARING, "Asceticism" in NCE, vol. 1, 944.
 - [3] See K.C. RUSSELL, "Asceticism" in NDCS, M. Downey, ed., Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1986, 63.
 - [4] See K.C. RUSSELL, "Asceticism" in NDCS, 63-65.
 - [5] See A. VOOBUS, *History of Asceticism in the Christian Orient: A Contribution to the History of culture in the Near East*, Vol. I, Lou vain, SCSCO, 1958, 9-10.
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documentation is Tatian, about the year 120.^[6] His life incarnated the movement of ascetic spirituality, and many men and women followed his example of life. They sought not only an ascetic flight, but also an attitude of radical opposition to the world and its goods.^[7]

History speaks that asceticism is not a concept or practice unique to Christianity. In Hinduism already during Vedic period more than a thousand years before Christ, monks gathered in small ashrams where prayer, meditation, poverty and detachment became a way of life. In the Graeco-Roman philosophical schools and religious fellowships asceticism was considered essential for an individual's receptiveness to communication with divinity. The motivation for certain ascetic practices was closely related to the belief that humanity had originally experienced a primordial state of perfection which was forfeited because of a transgression. By various ascetical practices the individual could be restored to a state where communication and union with divine was again possible.^[8] Asceticism as self-discipline is an indispensable virtue although it has a hard sound in many an ear. Whenever a particular goal is to be achieved, the means towards it are to be organized and regulated. For example, the

athlete goes through a rigid pattern of food and exercise for achieving the requisite strength and endurance for competition. The mountaineer williasly undergoes wind and cold, rain and storm in view of his achievement.^[9]

Moral discipline is the training of whole human nature so as to be successful in one's integrated life. Asceticism is thus self-control oriented towards the harmonization and correct mutual ordering of man's powers. Asceticism demands merely the renunciation of the morally unpermitted which would disturb the harmonious development of the essential dispositions of man indicated in his own nature.^[10] The word asceticism would be understood in its original meaning of "practice of virtue" rather than "practice of self-denial and austerity," as it came to be known in later centuries.^[11] Thus the ascetics of the early Church were widely known and praised for their virtues of fraternal charity, humility, obedience, patience, perfect chastity and the practice of prayer. Virgins and martyrs were the glory of the Christian Church and the highest expression of the eschatological and Christological elements of primitive Christian spirituality.^[12] Christians who desired to live as ascetics and to aim at perfection felt more and

[6] See A.VOEBUS, *History of Asceticism*, 31-39.

[7] See J. HABBI, "East Syrian Women Saints and their Contribution to Spiritual Theology," in *East Syrian Spirituality*, ed., A. THOTTAKARA, Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore, 1990, 100-101.

[8] See G.S. WAKEFIELD, ed., "Asceticism" in WDCS, 24.

[9] See F.M. PODIMATTAM, *Asceticism Today*, Good Tidings Publications, Bangalore, 1990, 9-10.

[10] See F.M. PODIMATTAM, *Asceticism Today*, p. 10.

[11] See P.POURRAT, *Christian Spirituality*, Newman Press, Westminster, 1953, Vol.1, 56.

[12] L. BOUYER treats the relationship between martyrdom, eschatology and the imitation of Christ in his book *The Spirituality of the New Testament & the Fathers*, Vol.1, Burns & Oates Ltd., London, 1960, 190-208.

more, at the beginning of the fourth century, the need of withdrawing from the world.^[13] As long as Christianity was a persecuted and proscribed religion, the fraternity of the faithful was sufficiently protected and churches easily managed to guard ascetics and virgins from pagan influences.^[14]

All the faculties of a man are working in collaboration. This is clear from the old saying: *mens sana in corpore sano*, which means a healthy mind in a healthy body. A right measure of renunciation is useful for everybody.^[15] It helps to create a harmonious collaboration between natural faculties. Without that, the inherent good qualities disappear or become evil as admonished by St. Antony, the father of Christian monasticism.^[16] In the language of the monastic fathers, all prayer, reading, meditation and all the activities of the monastic life are aimed at *purity of heart*, an unconditional and totally humble surrender to God, a total acceptance of ourselves and of our situation as willed by him. *Purity of heart*, is then

correlative to a new spiritual identity – the “self” as recognized in the context of realities willed by God – *purity of heart*, is the enlightened awareness of the new man and this is achieved through prayer and other ascetical practices.^[17] In fact, Syrian monasticism was a powerful spiritual force contributing to the history of civilization not only in its home ground but also in the Semitic and non-Semitic culture of the Near East, central and Eastern Asia and Africa.

In order to understand the Christian asceticism properly, we must know the Christian anthropology, especially of the Christian East. According to them man is not dichotomic, but trichotomic. The Eastern Fathers generally teach the trichotomy. For them Christians are composed of three elements, namely body, soul and the Holy Spirit.^[18] In the dichotomic conception the asceticism was suggested as a struggle between the body and soul. But in the trichotomic conception the problem is proposed

[13] According to St. Ephrem, the nucleus of the Church is or should be a community of ascetics, who promised virginity and practiced within the congregation fasting and vigils as form of proleptic paradise-life.

[14] See P. POURRAT, *Christian Spirituality*, 74-75. According to Bouyer, “Monasticism however is not simply asceticism, but an asceticism having a life separated from the world. Even this had its preparation in the last persecutions. ... Persecutions could cause faithful Christians to retire to the desert. ... A world become ... too friendly to Christianity but without much alteration in its ways and spirit-might not such a world ... lead them to take the same road, so as to find once more ... the detachment and the fervor they had known and could no longer know in a life suddenly become too easy?”

[15] See T. SPIDLIK, “East Syrian Asceticism” in *East Syrian Spirituality*, ed., A. Thottakara, Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore, 1990, 29.

[16] See T. SPIDLIK, *East Syrian Spirituality*, 29-30. See also E. DE CEA, ed., *Compendium of Spirituality*, vol. I, Alba House, New York, 2000, 21, 23.

[17] See D.A. FLEMING, ed., *The Fire and the Cloud: An Anthology of Catholic Spirituality*, Paulist Press New York, 1978, 354. In the Syriac tradition the aim of monasticism is the union with God in a complete renunciation of the life of this present world.

[18] T. SPIDLIK, *East Syrian Spirituality*, 133.

differently. We have, as Christians, the body, the soul and the Spirit. Our prime obligation is to help the Holy Spirit to penetrate into our soul and body more and more. This is achieved by means of the mortification of the flesh.^[19]

The flesh according to Eastern thinking means everything in our soul and body which resists the working of the Holy Spirit. In the baptism we have received the Holy Spirit. The highest norm for the Christian life will be to live according to the Spirit and obey his commands. The whole person is therefore under the influence of the Spirit. This Spirit must grow and be active more and more in our soul and body. Thus it transforms our whole existence. If we experience in our day today life some sort of resistance to the spirit, it is not natural, it is the "sin" in us, or the "flesh." According to Eastern thinking, virtue imparts strength, love means constancy, sin is weakness and instability.^[20] St. John speaks of the "sin" which will dominate in the world and in us. St. Paul also speaks more of the "flesh" which is opposed to the Spirit. There he speaks of the continuous struggle between the Spirit and the flesh.^[21]

Asceticism In The Bible

During the exile and the period thereafter, Israel had to bear oppression, persecution and suffering. It tried to understand this as expiation for the sins of the fathers and for their own sins; and consequently they practiced penance and abnegation in increasing measure. In the Books of Daniel, Judith, Esther and Tobit, prayer and fasting are the well-known means to religious training.^[22] Fasting and penance appears to have been considered as a preparation for encountering God. Moses and Daniel fasted in preparation for the reception of divine revelation.^[23] The theology of fasting as a preparation for meeting God has had a deep influence on the East Syrian spirituality. Another motive of the OT ascetical practices is to gain an inner conversion. Through the prophets, God sought to encourage these ascetical practices.^[24] The prophets urged the people to practice justice and charity together with their ascetical practices. The book of Tobit teaches this very clearly i.e., prayer is good when accompanied by fasting, almsgiving and righteousness. This biblical teaching is the basis of the Chaldean and Syro-malabaritan asceticism.^[25]

[19] T. SPIDLIK, *East Syrian Spirituality*, 92-93, 133. See also A. VOOBUS, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient: A Contribution to the History of Culture in the Near East*, Secretariat Du corpus Sco 7, Louvain, 1958, 19, 35.

[20] See T. SPIDLIK, *The spirituality of the Christian East*, 188.

[21] See A. VOOBUS, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient*, 95.

[22] Dan 1:17; Jud 8:6; Esth 4:16; Tob 12:8.

[23] Ex 34:28; Dt 9:9; Dan 9:3.

[24] Isam 7:2ff; Joel 2:12.

[25] See J. AERTHAYIL, *The Spiritual Heritage of the St. Thomas Christians*, Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore, 2001, 140. St. Ephrem exhorts his readers to love this highly acceptable form of asceticism and practice it so that may lead them to the eternal bride-chamber of life. He says 'O brethren, let us love fasting which multiplies the fruits of purity. Through it, the mind and soul are made clean, through it, thoughts become pure, and good aspirations arise in the heart ... Through it the strength of the soul is confirmed, the riches of the body are increased and all men are invited to the bride-chamber of life. It is cited in the above book *The Spiritual Heritage of the St. Thomas Christians*, 143.

On special occasions penitential fasting is imposed on the people e.g., on the Day of Atonement, and on the Feast of Purim.^[26] The priests abstain from wine before their service.^[27] The people fast before the Law is read to them and they fast for quieting God's anger and averting His judgment.^[28] David practiced fasting in recognition of his guilt. He fasted when his child lay grievously ill.^[29]

John the Baptist was a product of ascetical Judaism: by his life in the desert, his abnegation in food and clothing, and his celibacy. The demands he made of others were conversion, turning away from injustice, and the fruit of repentance.^[30] Jesus himself showed to his followers by word and deed the need of asceticism. He speaks with the highest regard for the Baptist as the one who is greater than any other born of woman. He warns the dangers of wealth and other possessions. He esteems marriage, and yet he teaches celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.^[31] Jesus himself fasted for forty days before commencing his mission. He gives to fasting a new dimension. It must be done joyfully, since it is a conversion and return to God. He however, defends his disciples, who being in the high era of the Messiah do not fast.^[32]

As a call to renunciation and abnegation, there is a saying of the Lord repeated several times: "if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself ... follow me". The sayings in Mark are found six times in the NT, with parallels of Mark found in Mathew and Luke.^[33] Like the Gospels, so too the letters of the Apostles demand moral order and endeavor. These epistles make known their confrontation with the ascetical currents of the time, inasmuch as they protest against false asceticism.^[34] The motto of Christian asceticism is henceforth: "to follow Christ." And this is why the martyr is the first and lasting model of the Christian ascetic. The word "martyr," which means "witness," is applied in the apocalypse of St. John to those who, giving up their lives in fidelity to Christ, witness by their death to the life – giving power of His cross.^[35]

Ascetical ways of one's day-to-day life like fasting is mentioned only occasionally in the NT. That does not mean that the NT underrates the significance of fasting and abstinence. On the contrary, Jesus expects his disciples to have a renunciatory life pattern and he gave it a sublimated importance through his own example.^[36] The new significance of

[26] Lev 16:19-31; Est 9:31.

[27] Lev 10:9.

[28] ISam 7:6; Jer 36:6-9.

[29] IISam 12:16 ff

[30] Mt 3:4-10.

[31] Mt 8:20; 19:21; Lk 16:19; Mt 19:12.

[32] Mt 6:16-18; Mk 2:19.

[33] Mk 8:34-36; Mt 16:24-26; Lk 9:23-25; Lk 14:27, 33, Jn 12:24-26.

[34] See F.M. PODIMATTAM, *Asceticism Today*, 25.

[35] See L. BOUYER, *Introduction to Spirituality*, Liturgical Press, Minnesota, 1981, 133.

[36] Mt 4:1-11.

Christian asceticism therefore lies in this fact that it is related to the paschal mystery of Christ.

The Epistle to the Colossians also has to contend with ascetical movements. The Colossians observed fasting on all holy days.^[37] They are not following the honorable traditions as they suppose, but human regulations from which the redeemed man is free.^[38] Even the pastoral letters are obliged to fight against erroneous doctrines, probably Gnostic in origin, which forbid marriage and demand abstinence from certain food.^[39] St. Paul in his preaching emphatically demands genuine and true asceticism. According to him, man is confronted by body and spirit, and the true Christian must discern the works of the flesh and of the spirit.^[40] For St. John the apostle, man finds himself between light and darkness, truth and lies and life and death.

Asceticism: It's Impact On Early Church

According to Rosemary Radar, asceticism became for the early Christians, the most successful way of acquiring salvation.^[41] The evangelists preached the coming of the kingdom of God and the need of total detachment from the momentary things of the world. The Sermon on the Mount stressed

the need for self-effacement in order to acquire the "things of the Spirit" and the kingdom of God." In fact, an ascetic life was seen as a sign of every true Christian.^[42]

In the early Christian communities there were groups of men and women living ascetical life based on prayer, fasting, almsgiving and other good works. During the third and fourth centuries many individuals and small groups of ascetics also flourished in the wilderness of Egypt. One of the outstanding solitaires, Anthony decided that since martyrdom was not possible, he would spend the rest of his life as a solitary 'dying daily to self' in imitation of Christ.^[43]

Early Christian spirituality was ascetical. By the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century the individualism of the solitary ascetics was slowly giving way to communal forms of ascetic life. The founders of the monastic communities saw great value in these support groups built on mutuality of goods. The quest for self-mastery was not rejected but incorporated in a context of mutual service in creating an environment conducive to greater union with God. Love towards the members of the community becomes a key to the development of harmonious life within the monastic family.^[44]

[37] Col 2:13.

[38] Col 2:8.

[39] I Tim 4:3.

[40] F.M. PODIMATTAM, *Asceticism Today*, 26. See also R. RADAR, "Asceticism," in *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed., G. Wakefield, London, 1986, 24-28.

[41] See R. RADAR, "Asceticism," 25.

[42] See also F.M. PODIMATTAM, *Asceticism Today*, 27.

[43] See also F.M. PODIMATTAM, *Asceticism Today*, 28.

[44] See also F.M. PODIMATTAM, *Asceticism Today*, 28.

The total life of the monastic was to be an ascetic one, but rooted in asceticism which stressed communal rather than individual aspects; sharing their individual possessions for common good and their vowed life become more authentic and devoted.^[45] Thus when we closely analyze the ascetical life, virtue is not seen as the denial of something but as an acceptance and affirmation of all that is most deeply human. Body and soul are seen as interdependent aspects of the integrated person. "According to the view of many theorists of asceticism, spiritual perfection is possible only as an outgrowth of human wholeness."^[46]

Fasting, assiduous prayer and mercy (almsgiving) are the triple forms of asceticism that can cure the wounds of sins and cleanse the stains of our souls. The aim of Syrian mysticism and asceticism is to make oneself a worthy dwelling place of God.^[47] In Syriac tradition however, the ascetic or solitary is essentially the 'single-minded' person who has set his mind on Christ alone. Isaac of Nineveh defines 'the world' not so much as the non-monastic life, but as 'bodily behavior and carnal thoughts' – that is to say the unspiritual life. Separation from the world, becoming a

'stronger' to it, as Isaac puts it, echoing here very ancient Syriac ascetic terminology, is thus a process of continuous *metanoia*, a total 'change of behavior' and attitude. In other words, it means a constant recollection of God: sit before His face all the time, thinking of Him and recollecting Him in your heart.^[48] Actually the Church of the East remained for centuries very much a *monastic Church*, a characteristic it shared in common with other Syriac Churches.^[49]

Oriental Christian asceticism is simply the systematic adoption of our whole life to the mystery of Christ. And to the faith we have received. It is the effort to make life accord with faith.^[50] The ascetical practices of the East Syrian Christians were consciously aimed at life-faith relationship and assimilation of the paschal mystery of Christ. Their ascetical life was not an isolated item of spiritual life but intrinsic to their liturgical and prayer life. Christian life is a personal relationship with God. The Divine Liturgy is the Church's principal instrument in fostering this personal relationship. Thus, Divine Liturgy tries to achieve its ultimate aim, the ultimate aim of all Christian life, namely, 'the glory of the adorable Trinity,' by making the participant a

[45] See also F.M. PODIMATTAM, *Asceticism Today*, 29. See also L. BOUYER, *The Spirituality of the New Testament*, 304-305.

[46] See F.M. PODIMATTAM, *Asceticism Today*, 29.

[47] See J. AERTHAYIL, *The Spiritual Heritage of the St. Thomas Christians*, 144-145. According to St. Ephrem, the monastic life is a new form of martyrdom is another way by which he expresses the thought of mortification. Monasticism is the transformation of martyrdom. Just as the martyrs were for bodily ordeals, torture and destruction, so do the monks accomplish the same through mortification and other ascetical practices. It is highly significant to notice that prayer stands at the top of the list of ascetic practices. See also A. VOOBUS, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient*, Vol. II, 99-100.

[48] See R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, Cambridge, London, 1975, 9-10.

[49] See E.R. HAMBYE, *Dimensions of Eastern Christianity*, St. Thomas Seminary, Vadavathoor, Kottayam, 1983, 59.

[50] See L. BOUYER, 125.

worthy dwelling place for the Trinity. Therefore, East Syrian Church envisaged and practiced an asceticism which is closely related to its mysticism, i.e., to live in the presence of God and experience the indwelling Trinity. In principle, the asceticism was directed towards this end: man must control his physical and psychological forces to make himself a 'worthy dwelling place' of God. Every act of asceticism and apostolate gets light and strength from the liturgy and every activity tends to it.^[51]

Yet another dimension of Christian life according to second Vatican Council is: "we also learn from the same Apostle that we must always carry around in our body the dying of Jesus so that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh."^[52] Christian asceticism has its source in baptism which inserts the faithful into the mystery of Christ who is dead and risen.^[53] Asceticism for a Syriac Christian was a practical form of living the Gospel. The existence of monastic asceticism is a theological datum which lies close to the very nerve centre of Christian origins and growth.^[54] It is related to the fundamental vocation of all Christians to sanctity and to do whatever we are called to do. Today's theological reflection and study

attempts to say that, a very effective, realistic and relevant form of asceticism would be to review all the areas of our life so as to see in what ways we can simplify our life style. It is the daily practical effort to meet the demands of our primary responsibilities.

The Indian Concept of Asceticism

The Indian term for asceticism is *tapas*, from the root meaning "to be hot," "to burn." *Tapas* signifies therefore "warmth," or "heat" the feeling usually painful, experienced in consequence of heat; or suffering in general, especially the pain which is voluntary and self-inflicted from a religious motive. Indian pay great respect to *sannyasins*, which proved that the Indian tradition holds in high esteem the life of *tapas*, (austerity, penance, asceticism) and *nyasa* (renunciation). In truth, *tapas* and *nyasa* are the two leading doctrines of the *Upanisads*.^[55] The thought that essentially underlies the Hindu conception of asceticism, and prompts the adoption of the ascetic life, is the desire to escape from the never-ending cycle of successive existences which brings in its train the suffering and misery to which all are subject. Asceticism offers a means to escape from an otherwise hopeless process, without beginning and without end.^[56] According to

[51] See J. AERTHAYIL, *The Spiritual Heritage*, 220.

[52] See *S C*, 12.

[53] See T. MANNOORAMPARAMPIL, "Liturgical Spirituality," in *Eastern Theological Reflections in India*, ed., X. Koodapuzha, OIRSI, No. 216, Vadavathoor, 1999, 229.

[54] See J. KALLARANGATT, "Dimensions and Perspectives of Oriental Theology," in *Eastern Theological Reflections in India*, 91.

[55] See J. KATTACKAL, *Religion and Ethics in Advaita*, C.M.S. press, Kottayam, 1982, 23.

[56] See F.M. PODIMATTAM, *Asceticism Today*, 33. See also Religious Hinduism, by Jesuit Scholars, Allahabad, 1968, 184. Man should do penance. For the forgiveness of his sins he must perform it. According to Manu, man should do penance for his intentional and unintentional sins and offences. By removing the sins and offences, penance purifies man. 'Dharma Sastras' were revealed by God to Manu who wrote it down for the posterity some time between 600-300 B.C. For details See The Laws of Manu, in The Sacred Books of the East, series ed., by MAX MULLER, Delhi, 1964, Vol. XXV Introduction, xi-cxxxviii.

Hindu understanding, penance and other sacrifices are absolutely necessary to reach that final state of perfection where the subject-object dichotomy disappears and where man realizes that he is one with the Absolute: 'I am the Supreme Being.' The Hindus try to reach this stage by meditation, by mortification of the flesh and of all the sense, in fact by complete self-abnegation. Therefore, all the Hindus practice some sort of mortification, generally fasting, in order to attain final liberation.

In the Bagavath Gita, *tapas* in the form of renunciation, is the highest form which action can take and the essence of ascetic practices is not painful mortification of the body, but the abnegation of the selfish desires and the sacrifice of selfish inclinations and love of ease in the cause of right devotion to the supreme God. In the Bhagavad-Gita the philosophical theory of asceticism, appears in its loftiest and purest form.^[57]

Ramayana and Mahabharata add little to the general conception of *tapas*; although they offer many examples of its practice, and contain narratives of ascetics who proved through their own experience its virtue and power. Rama in his hermitage on the banks of the river Godavari lived as a peaceful, gentle hermit who has renounced the world and lived as true ascetic. In the Mahabharata descriptions of the hermit and of the ascetic are found ideals which agree almost verbatim with those of Manu. In the same book, true

and false *tapas* are distinguished from one another. "Study of Veda and avoiding injury to any living being, men call bodily asceticism; the true spiritual asceticism is control of speech and thought."^[58]

The effects of penance and austerity are said to be many. They remove sins, give extraordinary powers to the one who practices them and imparts salvific knowledge. Manu had pronounced all the basic principles about a life of penance, which have by and large influenced the ascetical life of India.^[59]

The most general term for a Hindu ascetic is *sadu* a pious man, a saint, or a sage. Perhaps more than any other country asceticism in India has been under the definite and strong sanction of religion. The sanction owed much to the example of the greatest saints and heroes of old, and of the gods themselves, who are represented as enduring self-inflicted tortures for thousands of years in order to attain supernatural powers. According to Hindu belief, The Supreme Being himself endured age-long austerities in order to bring the creatures into existence. There was no limit to the power of self-mortification; all things were possible to *tapas*.

Asceticism, and the habits and practices associated with it, have been adopted in several instances in India by Christian missionaries and native Indians with the purpose and hope of thereby commending their teaching to the people around them. Their action has been

[57] See also F.M. PODIMATTAM, *Asceticism Today*, 35.

[58] See F.M. PODIMATTAM, *Asceticism Today*, 35.

[59] See also J. AERTHAYIL, *The spiritual Heritage of the St. Thomas Christians*, 154.

generally appreciated by their fellow countrymen and has been instrumental in more conversions.^[60]

There is probably no other country in which asceticism has been so widely practiced or its ideals held in such a high regard, as in India. The principles of the Sacred Books of India, and the examples of their sages, have kept before the mind of the people, the thought that, abnegation of the world, with rejection of its pleasures and pursuits, is the supreme good. Although the motive of the bodily self-mortification of the Indian *sadhu* may have been in the ultimate analysis to gain something better for him, which is the most worth having and his example motivated others longing for a higher experience which the material world cannot offer.^[61] The ascetical life of the Church must be based on its theology, liturgy and canonical discipline. Faith is ultimately a commitment, a total surrender of one's self to the revealing God in Jesus Christ. It grows and strengthened by prayer and asceticism.

Asceticism: A Theological Overview

Asceticism is the conscious effort to grow in interior freedom in order to discern and respond to the will of God in every situation. There has been a strong tradition relating to internally asceticism in the Church from the time of the Apostles to the present

day. We experience ourselves as divided and broken; we recognize the need for integrating all our feelings, desires and thoughts into a continued response of "yes" to the Father. Nothing could be positive or more personally fulfilling than this progressive and conscious growth into wholeness in Christ.^[62] To live in the presence of God and to experience the indwelling Trinity: this was the core of its mysticism. East Syrian asceticism was directed towards this end: man must control his physical and psychic forces to make himself a 'worthy dwelling place' of God.^[63]

In the past asceticism has been negatively presented and practiced, in a spirit which is the very opposite of the true life-giving asceticism. In every true ascetical practice, there is the external as well as the internal element. The external consists in the symbolic action which may take various forms. The internal element comprises the inner religious sentiments of humble adoration, gratitude, contrition for sins, dependence on God's mercy etc. It is very important to recover the truth that asceticism is a pure means to an end that its moral value depends on the end it serves. It has high moral value when it leads to true conversion, that is to say, to a renewed orientation of life towards greater service of God and men.

Asceticism is closely related to the fundamental vocation of all Christians to

[60] See F. M. PODIMATTAM, *Asceticism Today*, 37.

[61] See F.M. PODIMATTAM, *Asceticism Today*, 37. See also M.P. JOSEPH, *The Bhagavad-Gita: Comments and Index* Pointing out the Similarities with Christianity, Kamat Printing Press, Goa, 1978, 68-69, 138.

[62] See F.M. PODIMATTAM, *Asceticism Today*, 99.

[63] See S. P. BROCK, collected the work, *Studies in Syriac Spirituality: The Syrian Churches Series*, Vol, XIII, ed., J.VELLIAN, Anita Press Poona, 1988, 43-44.

sanctity. It is essentially the determined effort to do whatever we are called to do. Through this act of penance one is able to overcome self-centeredness and thereby to free himself from self in order to go out to the neighbour in love. While speaking about ascetical practices, we have seen that the life of single purpose is emphasized by the Eastern fathers. A virgin or a married one, who lives a life of abstinence from marital acts, concentrates oneself to commit fully to Christ. Monasticism and the ascetical life experiences are the instruments by which assist one to live like Christ and to live in union with him. Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."^[64]

The law which Jesus here barrows from the vegetable kingdom, namely, that self-sacrifice is the condition of all life, is a law that is universal in its application. It is to be noted, however, that the dying with Christ is for rising with him to a new life. Dying is for appropriating the risen life of Christ, the death for the sake of life which Christ bestowed upon us by baptism. Asceticism is meant to help establish the risen life of Christ in our

daily life.^[65] In conclusion, it is important to remember that Christian asceticism is not merely an exercise of abnegation for the sake of abnegation. Neither is it a practice that will automatically result in personal holiness of the individual. This concept of asceticism is a mistake that has been perpetuated in the East Syrian monastic tradition for centuries. Abnegation is part of a total process: apart from that process, it has no value. The element of suffering that enters into the process of creative discipline is merely a side-effect and not a goal. The Christian must not concentrate on the "value of suffering" as if suffering were a value in itself. Suffering is merely an element of the dialectic into which the whole person enters as a response to the Spirit and to the challenge of identification with Christ in his total self-giving.^[66]

The goal of the renunciation of the world is to return to a different world, to the "paradisiae" state of man, where everything nourishes the remembrance of God. Asceticism is a divine experience so far as it is considered not as a goal but a means to arrive at the goal – the happiness to see God everywhere and in everything.^[67]



[64] Jn 12:24.

[65] See F. M. PODIMATTAM, *Asceticism Today*, 54.

[66] See F. M. PODIMATTAM, *Asceticism Today*, 70-71.

[67] See T. SPIDLIK, "East Syrian Asceticism," 142. See also R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 44-50; 353.

BOOK REVIEW

Pauly Maniyattu, ed., *East Syriac Theology: An Introduction*, Ephrem's Publications, Satna 2007, ISBN: 81-88065-04-8. pp. 374. Price: Rs.200.

Vatican Council II in its decree on the Oriental Churches insists on the obligation of the Eastern faithful to preserve and promote their ecclesial heritage; "All these, then, must be observed with greatest fidelity by the Orientals themselves. They are to aim always at a more perfect knowledge and a more exact use of them, and if they have fallen short because of contingencies of time and persons, they shall endeavour to return to their ancestral traditions." (OE6).

The book titled "East Syriac Theology, An Introduction" is the expression of an earnest desire to contribute to the fulfillment of the wish expressed by the Council Fathers. This book makes us familiar with the rich theological patrimony of the East Syriac tradition and thus leads us to a more perfect knowledge of the ecclesial heritage of the Syriac Orient.

This book is the fruit of the national symposium on Syriac theology conducted by St. Ephrem's Theological College, Satna in 2004. The articles in this volume serve as brief introductions to different branches of East Syriac theology, providing us with some clear idea about the characteristic features of the theology in the East Syriac tradition. The different articles in this book are indeed attempts of introducing the various aspects of the East Syriac theology.

There is an introduction by the editor, explaining the context and relevance of this book. The introduction gives us a summary information about all the articles in the book. The introduction is followed by a short study on the relevance of Eastern theology by Bishop Isidore Fernandez. Bishop Abraham Mattam's article on the historical setting of East Syriac theology prepares the ground for understanding and appreciating the Syriac theological heritage, explaining the great role played by the theological School of Nisibis in the development of the East Syriac theology. Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil, in his article on the basic features of early Syriac theology, discusses the important characteristics of the East Syriac theology. Fr. Thomas Kuzhuppil gives in his article a brief introduction to the patristic feature of the East Syriac theology. Fr. George Kaniarakath CMI provides us with a remarkable illustration of the biblical emphasis of the East Syriac theology, focusing the theological writings of Aphrahat and Ephrem. Fr. Thomas Anikuzhikattil provides us with a detailed study on the general characteristics of the theology of St. Ephrem.

Fr. James Palackal's article is an attempt to trace out the ecclesiology in the East Syriac tradition. In the article on East Syriac Christology Fr. John Thoppil gives a precise and brief account of the Christological

position of the Church of the East and compares it with the christological positions of the Antiochene and Alexandrian traditions. The article on the Syriac Portraits of Christian Salvation by Fr. Thomas Kollamparampil, CMI is an exposition of the Syriac soteriological understanding. The author has analysed many examples from the Fathers, especially from Aphrahat and St. Ephrem. Fr. Thomas Neendoor's article examines the pneumatological understanding of the early Church and reaches certain conclusions regarding the understanding of the early Syriac Church on the Holy Spirit.

Fr. Jose Kochuparampil, discussing the theology of 'rāzē, presents to us the theology of the sacraments according to the East Syriac Tradition'. Rāzē or mysteries is Syriac tradition's favourite term parallel to the Western term 'sacrament'. Fr. Pauly Maniyattu, the editor of the book, summarizes in his article the theology of Eucharist in the East Syriac

tradition. Fr. James Puthuparampil OIC, aims at presenting to us a Syriac Mariology based on the writings of St. Ephrem and Jacob of Serugh on Blessed Virgin Mary. The article shows us the very special position which the Syriac tradition assigns to Blessed Virgin Mary in the Church. The article on moral theology by Fr. Dominic Vechoor tries to reach at a moral theology of the Eastern Churches in general, and then particularly of the East Syriac tradition. The author provides us with the general outlines of the moral reflections in the East.

As it is said on the cover, this book illustrates the characteristic features of the East Syriac theology. It is indeed an attempt to highlight the potentiality of the East Syriac tradition to contribute to the theological progress of Church today. I am sure that good number of people may profit from this book, enriching themselves with the theological patrimony of the Syriac Orient

Fr. Mathew Mullassery

NEWS

New Diocese Of Bhadravati Created, Fr. Joseph Erumachadath Appointed First Bishop

On Monday, 21 August 2007, Varkey Cardinal Vithayathil, the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church erected a new Syro-Malabar diocese, the diocese of BHADRAVATHI, carving out the entire civil district of Shimoga from the territory of the diocese of Mananthavady. The See of the new diocese and the residence of its bishop will be in the town of Bhadravathi and St. Antony's Parish Church, Iduvally, will be the Pro-Cathedral of the new diocese until a new Cathedral is built in Bhadravathi. The new diocese and its bishop shall be suffragan to the Metropolitan See of Tellicherry and its Metropolitan respectively. The newly erected diocese of Bhadravathi has an area of 10,553 sq.kms with a total population of 16,39,595 of which around 6000 are Catholics. There are 21 parishes and mission stations looked after by 20 priests belonging to the MCBS Congregation. 59 religious sisters belonging to 6 religious congregations in 14 convents are doing ministry through 5 High Schools, 6 Upper Primary Schools, 12 Nursery Schools, 22 Dispensaries, 10 Student Hostels, 10 Tailoring Schools, and 12 Village Clinics.

Rev. Fr. Joseph Erumachadath, the Bishop-elect was born on 10 April 1960 at Uppukandam, in the Erattayar parish of the present Diocese of Idukki, in Kerala as the son of Mr. Thomas and Mrs. Mariakutty. After his High School education, he joined the Missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament in 1978. His religious profession was on 17th May 1981 and priestly ordination on 7th May 1988. He did his philosophy at St. Joseph's Pontifical Seminary, Alwaye and theology at Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune. He holds a Doctorate in Theology from Leuven University and has published his thesis entitled. "The Church as community of Jesus' disciples." After his ordination he served for two years as a member of the Retreat Team in Sannidhanam Ashram, at Illithode, and later as secretary to the Superior General. From 1999 to 2002 he was the Rector of the MCBS Minor Seminary at Athirumpuzha. From 2002 to 2005 he was the provincial superior of the Emmaus Province of MCBS. At present he is Vice-Rector of Sanathana Seminary, Thamarasserry.

Kerala Church Leaders Vow To Safeguard Minority Rights

The Church leaders in Kerala reiterated their resolve to protect minority rights at all costs, in a public meeting held at Kottayam on August 12, 2007. Organized by the various Christian denominations under the auspices of the Inter-Church Council for Education. The meeting was inaugurated by the Mar Thoma Metropolitan Philipose Mar Chrysostum, head of the Mar

Thoma Church of Malabar. Chairman of the Inter-Church Council, Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil in his keynote address opined that with the huge turnout for Sunday's meeting, the decision-makers would perhaps take a realistic approach to the minority rights issue which was pivotal to the crisis in the education sector. Sunday's meeting which was chaired by Metropolitan Thomas Mar Athanasius of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church was attended by the various Christian denominations. A resolution was adopted during the meeting which protested against attempts to undermine minority rights and expressed apprehension at the stand taken by the state government regarding the same.

Good Shepherd Major Seminary - Blessing of the Chapel and the Theology Block

On Thursday, 26 July 2007, the Major Archbishop, His Beatitude Varkey Cardinal Vithayathil blessed the beautiful chapel of the Good Shepherd Major Seminary Kunnoth in the presence of many Archbishops and bishops, priests, religious sisters, seminarians and a few benefactors and invited guests. During the Holy Qurbana presided over by the Major Archbishop, His Grace Mar Jacob Thoomkuzhy delivered the homily. After the solemn Qurbana, His Grace Mar Joseph Perumthottam, the Archbishop of Changanacherry blessed the newly built theology block. In his inaugural address, the Major Archbishop called the newly blessed chapel as the heart of the seminary and wished that the seminarians draw their spiritual strength and nourishment from this centre as the source and summit of their lives. His Grace Mar Joseph Powathil, His Grace Mar Jacob Thoomkuzhy, His Grace Mar Mathew Moolakkat, and a number of bishops congratulated the seminary authorities on their success. His Grace Mar George Valiamattam thanked everyone for their help and support in completing this project.



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